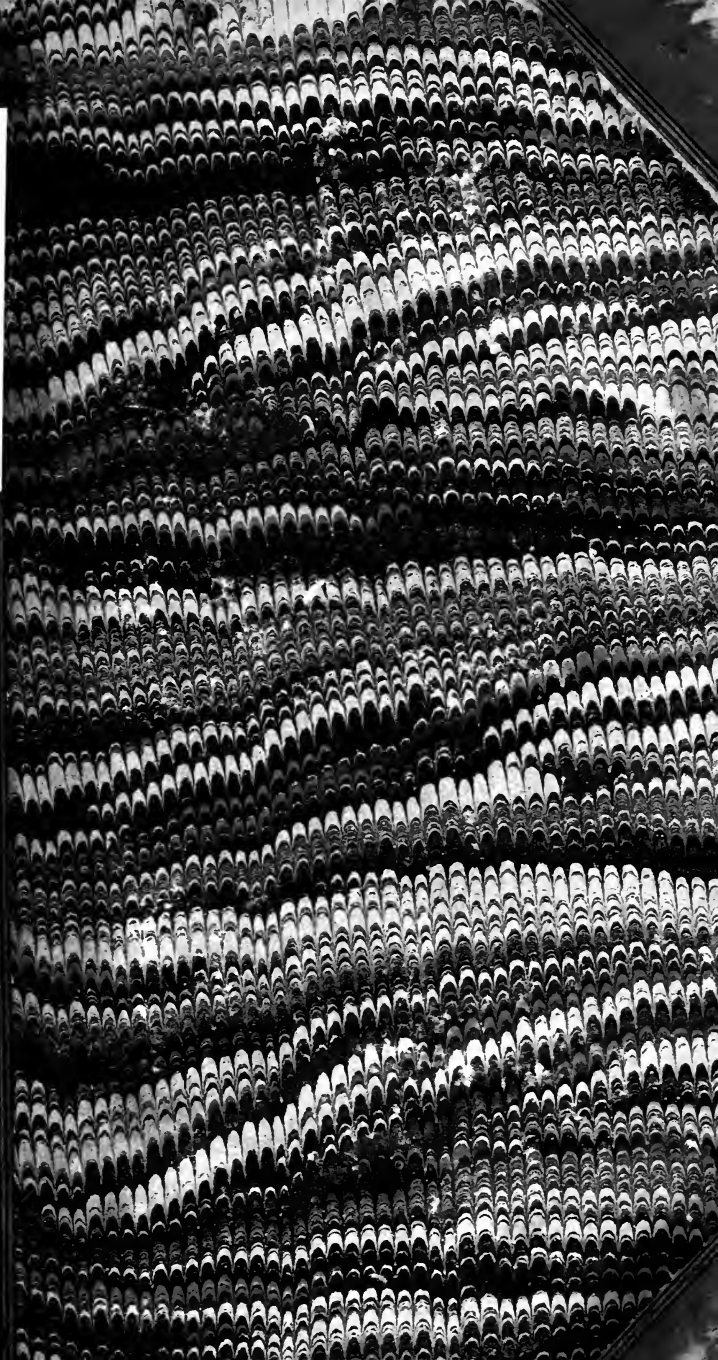


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## THE BANDIT'S TEST.

Vol. 2. p. 206.

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THE  
LIVES AND EXPLOITS  
OF  
BANDITTI AND ROBBERS,  
BY  
C. MAC FARLANE, ESQ.  
VOL. 1.



*The Pass of Bonny.*

LONDON: EDWARD BULL, HOLLES STREET.  
AND J. ANDREWS, NEW BOND STREET.

1833.

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THE  
LIVES AND EXPLOITS  
OF  
BANDITTI AND ROBBERS  
IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

BY  
C. MAC FARLANE, ESQ.  
AUTHOR OF "CONSTANTINOPLE IN 1829," AND "THE ROMANCE  
OF ITALIAN HISTORY."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:  
EDWARD BULL, HOLLES STREET,  
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J. ANDREWS, NEW BOND STREET.  
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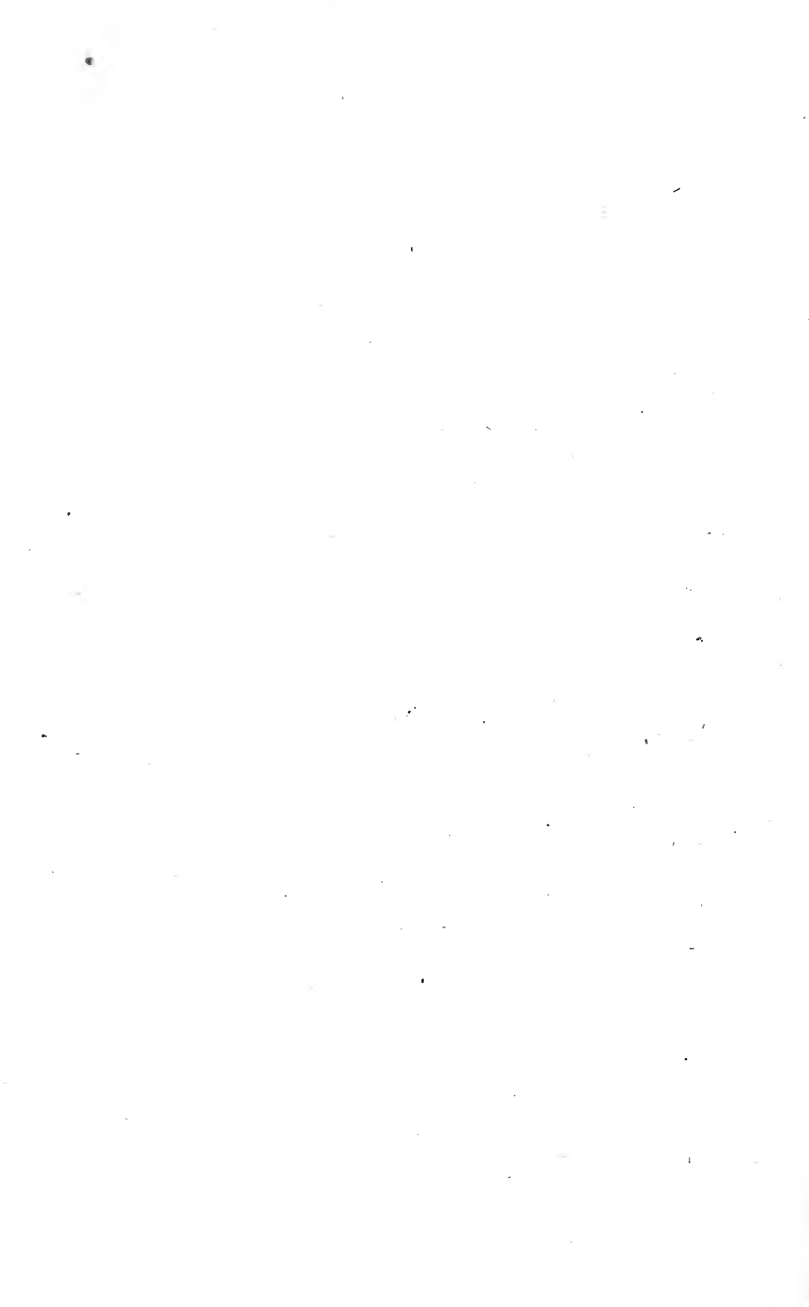
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\*.\* With the exception of the Frontispieces, the Illustrations to these Volumes were designed and engraved by Messrs. Bagg.

LIVES AND EXPLOITS  
OF  
BANDITTI AND ROBBERS.

VOL. I.

B



# LIVES OF BANDITTI,

&c.

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## GENERAL VIEW OF BANDITTI AND ROBBERS.

THERE are few subjects that interest us more generally, than the adventures of robbers and banditti. In our infancy they awaken and rivet our attention as much as the best fairy tales, and when our happy credulity in all things is wofully abated, and our faith in the supernatural fled, we still retain our taste for the adventurous deeds and wild lives of brigands. Neither the fulness of years nor the maturity of experience and worldly wisdom can render us insensible to tales of terror such as fascinated our childhood, nor preserve us from a "creeping of the flesh" as we read or listen to the narrative containing the daring exploits of some robber-chief, his wonderful address, his narrow escapes, and his prolonged crimes, seated by our

own peaceful hearth. It is another thing when we hear of these doings on the spots where they have just occurred, and may occur again : for in that case the idea that we may adorn a future tale, instead of telling it, is apt to make attention too painful, and the effect produced will be too intense, and will exceed that certain degree of dread and horror which gives us pleasure in romances, tragedies, and other efforts of the imagination. If we happen to be well protected at the time and have a tolerable consciousness of security, then indeed we may doubly enjoy these tales on the spots—the solitary heath, the mountain-pass, or the forest—where the facts they relate occurred ; but under general circumstances the exploits of a Pepe Mastrillo or a Mazzaroni will not be agreeable entertainment across the Pontine marshes or through the defiles of the Neapolitan frontier. I remember one dark night, in which, with much difficulty, we found our way from the Neapolitan town of San Germano to the village of Sant' Elia, in the bosom of the Apennines ; that when a friend (my only companion) suddenly stopped and pointed out a place, and told the story of a robbery, and of a priest's having been murdered there a short time before, I could not help wishing he had kept his anecdote until

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we were ourselves in a place of safety—nor indeed help feeling rather uncomfortable until a white-faced chapel on the top of a little detached hill gleaming through the obscurity, showed us we were near the village we had been so long in search of.

But, to return to robber stories and their effects generally, it may be said that no species of narrative, except, perhaps, that of shipwrecks, produces a deeper impression on people of all ages and conditions. This conviction, and the circumstances of my having passed a number of years in the south of Italy—the land of brigandism *par excellence*—and of having repeatedly visited the wildest parts of that country, and possessed myself there of some curious details, induce me collect my own materials, and by uniting them to the authentic statements of others, to produce, for a winter evening amusement, a sort of history of Italian banditti. To this I will attach sketches of some famous robbers of other countries, and the most amusing or characteristic adventures I can find. I may venture to promise the reader, that the first, or Italian Part, will be tolerably complete, and this will serve to convey an idea of the manners and habits of robbers generally.

Before the reader proceeds further, I will warn him, that he will not find my robbers such romantic, generous characters, as those that occasionally figure in the fields of fiction. He will meet with men strangers to that virtuous violence of robbing the rich to give to the poor. They give to the poor indeed, but it is as spies and instruments of their own crimes, or at least in order to induce the poor to remain passive while they carry on their work of depredation against the rich. It could scarcely be deemed great liberality in men, who, fresh from the easy plunder of a treasure, should scatter a few dollars among the needy peasantry, but even these few dollars are given from motives directly selfish. I shall have one touching trait to offer of a robber of the Abruzzi, who respected the person and property not only of a poet but of the poet's companions, who fell into his hands; but among Italian banditti, I never could hear of a Robin Hood, and still less of a refined metaphysical "Robber Moor," that high-minded, romantic hero of Schiller, who is driven to bold villainy by the paltry, covert vices of society.

The effect Schiller's tragedy of "The Robbers" produced on the romantic youths of Germany is well remembered; they became enamoured of a



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brigand's life, and thought the loftier and more generous virtues incompatible with a life of dull honesty and submission to the laws of society. But the *beau ideal* that deluded them was only ideal, and in reality robbers no more deliver touching monologues to the setting sun, than they unite elegance and virtue with violence and guilt, and when they took to the forest and the wild, and levied contributions (as several raw students actually did) they must soon have found they could qualify themselves for the gallows without reaching the sublimities of poetry and sentiment elicited by the fervid imagination of the poet—who, be it recollected, was a stripling like themselves when he wrote “The Robbers.”

The soberer minds of British youth were never led by play, poem, or romance, to such a dangerous imitation; but I can well recall the time, when, with others of my own age, I fancied it one of the most romantic things possible to be a captain of bold banditti, with a forest more leafy than Ardennes for my haunt, and a ruined abbey or castle, or inapproachable cave for my home—with followers so true that they would rather die piecemeal than betray their captain or a comrade, and with the enviable *finale* to every day's perils and

adventures—of the jovial banquet, the song, the chorus, and the wild legendary tale, or recital of our own daring deeds. This was the dream of a boy; but even when I was emancipated from the pleasant enthrallments of “The Bandit’s Bride,” and similar productions, it was long before I could divest brigandism of its cloke of romance, and see it in its own horrible nakedness. In my own particular case, which I dare say is not a singular one, the charm of bandittirromance, was strengthened and prolonged by the pictures of Salvator Rosa and the prints from that great master and from our own Mortimer; and though I never went quite the length of a young friend, who, on seeing for the first time a savage, rugged mountain pass, with a torrent brawling through it, on the confines of Calabria, expressed a hurried regret that there were not a few of such figures as Salvator depicted, to make it complete; still I rarely could see such a scene without fancying such figures, and as, between Spain and Italy, I wandered a good deal in my youth, in romantic scenery, the brigands by frequent association of ideas became familiar to me, and were invested with all the picturesqueness of Nature and of the

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painters. In this manner they were still somewhat ennobled in my eyes.

But even this minor degree of illusion had considerably given way to time and experience, and the stories of the vulgar atrocities of the banditti, which I had heard in Apulia, the Calabrias, the Abruzzi, and the Roman states, when chance brought me in contact and in safe colloquy with an ex-brigand, whose account of his own calling was well calculated to remove the slight degree of romantic feeling with which I could still reflect on the banditti.

I have known ex-ministers, and ex-constitution-makers of various countries, and have made my bow to more than one ex-king; but I never was acquainted with more than one notorious and self-confessed ex-robber. The reader will therefore excuse my introducing him with some state and circumstance, and be pleased to take my word, that the scene has not been got up for the occasion, but is truly such as presented itself when I first saw Luca, or, as he was more commonly called, Passo di Lupo (Wolf's-step). Never was scene more romantic or better calculated to revive the visions of boyhood, or early youth. It was in the wild but

beautiful regions, of Monte Gargano, situated between the vast plains of Apulia, so recently overrun by banditti, and the mountains of the Abruzzi, so celebrated for the same characters in days of old. It was near the Adriatic sea and the old town of Peschici, to whose half-ruined baronial castle I had gone with the Neapolitan nobleman, whom, with a great extent of adjoining land, it belonged to. Unlike the indolent, careless class that dream away their lives in the capital between San Carlo and the Corso, my friend had devoted much of his time to a country life, and was busy in trying to improve his estates, one hundred and fifty miles away from the vanities of Naples. We had been felling trees and making roads on a grand scale, and among our projected improvements had turned our attention to the procuring of water, of which the country stood deplorably in need. There was a lake in the neighbourhood, and a large and fine lake it is, boasting a classical name, moreover; but a dry plain, and a lofty ridge of hills intervened between the Uranus and us, and not a drop of its fluid could we procure thence for our improvements. We had dug a well of appalling depth, but no water would make its appearance. We had repaired the large, rude reservoirs,

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or open tanks, which caught the rain-water as it fell, and seriously thought of digging and building a new one, when we were led to a fine old tank which existed just where we wanted it, but which the indolent inhabitants had neglected so long that it was useless, and its existence almost unknown. Our object now was to clean out this, and so to coat the stone-wall or lining within it, as to prevent the precious fluid from escaping by oozing through it. This promised to be a work of no trifling difficulty, for the old reservoir, which might have been some forty feet in diameter by thirty deep, was grown full of rough, thick bushes, briars, and underwood, whilst three considerable trees had shot up in the midst—the whole offering that tenacity of root and richness and rankness of vegetation that distinguish a southern climate. However, when three or four woodmen had worked a whole day within the rude circle, what with cutting and slashing, and hewing with the axe, there was considerable havoc made—and then we determined to finish the work by applying fire. A small quantity of dry wood, and the sun-dried husks and flags of the Indian corn were thrown in among the lopped branches and the still green boughs and bushes. We waited till some time after sun-set for the *ter-*

*rano* or periodical wind that blew very freshly down a narrow valley, and then applied the match. A smouldering fire, accompanied by a disagreeable pungent sensation, affecting both eyes and nostrils, was soon succeeded by a broad flash of flame, and what seemed almost a general and simultaneous ignition of the contents of our old reservoir. My friend and myself were soon fain to quit the edge of the hollow circle, and to take our station at some yards distance. Now the fire hissed and crackled, and the flames rose up as though they had proceeded from the crater of a volcano; and what added to the hellishness of the mighty cauldron, was a number of unfortunate serpents that had long held their undisturbed home in the rank hollow, and now hissed with the flames, and darted through the fire, seeking in vain to escape from the tank, or to find a spot where the fire was not already, or fast approaching. To our own labourers, who crowded round the spot, were soon added groups of peasants from the neighbourhood, and a wilder, more picturesque set of fellows can hardly be found, than the peasantry of Monte Gargano. I have seen by night charcoal-burners in the forests of that country, that might very well have been taken for the fiends of German superstition that haunt

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the Hartz forest, pursuing the same occupation. But the magnificent conflagration we had lighted far surpassed the blaze of a charcoal pyre ; and as the blood-red light which beamed upwards from the deep tank that was soon for the greater part occupied with nothing but glowing embers, struck on the expressive faces of the spectators, all turned towards it, and on the green boughs of lofty trees which grew round the tank ; and now and then, as the night wind roared over the hollow, fiercer than the seven-times-heated furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, when a flame would tower up, higher than the topmost tree of the forest, as if it would invade the deep blue Midsummer-night sky, where a crescent moon and the quiet pale stars seemed wondering at what we were doing, the effect produced was of the most striking and even awful character. I have spoken of forest-trees :—I should have said before that the old reservoir was on the *lisière* or edge of a forest, which for extent and wildness, and the sublime height of its trees, I have never seen surpassed.

Whilst enjoying this scene and watching the peasants who formed so important a part of it, I was struck with the appearance of a fellow with the deep scar of an old wound across his

swarthy brow, and his left arm in a sort of sling. "Oh! that is Passo di Lupo," said my friend's factor, when I asked who he was; "that is Passo di Lupo, who was a long time a brigand, and out with the Vardarelli." (These Vardarelli were the very Coryphei of modern banditti, of whom more anon.) "Indeed!" said I rather surprised; "then what does he here?"

"He returned with others to society," said the factor, "some years ago, when the Government of King Ferdinand, that could not suppress them, offered a free pardon to all who would lay down their arms and accept it."

I said he was a ferocious-looking fellow, or made some similar remark; to which the factor replied that such was the effect of his former life, but now he was not so bad as he looked; that he was true to his salt, and as for honesty, he might be sent from Peschici to Manfredonia (as nice a road for a robbery as can well be conceived!) with uncounted gold—in short, such were his good moral qualities, and his activity and capability of bearing fatigue, that the factor thought of recommending him to his master, as a *guardiano*.\*

\* Guardiani, are *gardes champêtres*. They are nearly always armed for the protection of the property on their master's estates.



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On my expressing a wish to know more about him, the factor began his story; but by this time, the fire was almost burned out, the tank was almost cleaned, save of a copious residue of cinders and ashes, and my friend, who had heard too many of these stories to care about them, was anxious for his bed. Accordingly we rode back to our quarters in the old castle (where, from my bed-room window I could drop a stone plump into the deep Adriatic), the factor telling me as we went, that if I chose, he would send Passo di Lupo to me on the morrow to relate his own adventures. The ex-robber, he said, was averse to doing this, except now and then in a cosy corner, with a particular friend or two, but no doubt would oblige me, particularly if I would say a word or so in his favour to the Prince as to the place of *guardiano*, which he was desirous of obtaining.

It was not, however, on the next day, nor was it till several days after, and when I was thinking of very different matters, that the fellow I had seen by the reservoir made his bow to me as I was mounting my horse for a ride in the forest. The factor had prepared him to be communicative.

The first direct question I asked him was, what had induced him to be a brigand? His answer

was truly characteristic; for I scarcely ever heard of a career of crime in Italy but what had its origin in the passion of love, and, odd as it may appear, I never knew a Neapolitan speak of assassination, otherwise than as a misfortune that had happened to him in committing it.

“Please your excellency,” said the fellow, “I was making love with a Paesana, and had the misfortune to give a blow of the knife (*un botto di coltello*) to one I thought my rival!”

From his narrative it appeared that this blow had been mortal, and the judicial authorities, so injudicious and unreasonable as to *persecute* him who had dealt it; on which he had fled, and after having been hunted from place to place, and put to great straits, he had repaired to the band of robbers, commanded by the brothers Vardarelli, whose general haunt was about the Ponte di Bovino, a defile in the mountains not above thirty miles from his own home in Monte Gargano.

He was not received with open arms as he expected, but, on the contrary, was watched with a jealous eye; nor was it for some time, and until after hearing mass celebrated by a priest who was in league with the banditti, and after taking a most terrific oath, that he was admitted into their ranks,

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and allowed to accompany them in their excursions.

I thought the fellow's hawk-like eyes still beamed joyfully as he talked of stopping Government mails and diligences, and rich farmers and graziers from the fairs of Foggia; and as he told me, how, at times, he had scoured the whole plain of Apulia, and crossed the mountains of Basilicata and plunged into other provinces—meeting nowhere a formidable resistance—nearly everywhere an impunity of plunder. But when I questioned him as to the division and disposal of that plunder, and how he lived the while, the expression of his countenance was decidedly sad. It appeared that a bolder few, or the bullies, or what he called in Neapolitan language, the *guappi* of the honest community, invariably possessed themselves of the lion's share of the spoil, leaving to the inferiors of the band less than the jackal's garbled portion. And even the money that was doled out to him; he could not enjoy it! It was rarely he could venture into a town to exchange it for the dress, and commodities or little luxuries he desired—in general, he lost it, quicker than he won it, with his comrades at cards. At times, with good dollars in his girdle, he could not procure a dish of macaroni or a draught of good

wine. The robbers were frequently so hard pressed, that the sheep they stole were rudely roasted entire (wool, skin, garbage and all), or even torn to pieces and devoured at once, whilst the flesh was still quivering with life. They were, for the most part, obliged to hide themselves in wild forests, in mountain caves, or in mountain villages, in inaccessible places, scarcely less horrid—alternately cajoling and murdering the wretched peasants—now relying on them as trusty accomplices, and now dreading to be betrayed by them into the hands of justice. My interlocutor said that the effect of this ever-watchful, precarious mode of life, was such on him, that for years after he had quitted it, he could never enjoy a sound sleep in his bed, but that he was constantly starting up convulsively, and shrieking out his former companions' names.

The robbers felt themselves at war with all mankind, and they were not at peace even among themselves. Their quarrels were frequent and violent, and generally ended—as they were likely to do with men so familiarized with crime—in blood and death. So far from placing confidence in each other, a party was never beyond its time in reaching the place of rendezvous, or a single brigand missed in the band, than the most agonizing ap-

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prehensions of treachery and surprise agitated the mass.

Some of the robbers were supplied with wives or innamorate of their own—the rest helped themselves where and when they could. This was the most fertile ground of strife, and the tales which Passo di Lupo told me may be fancied, but are much too atrocious to be repeated. From his account, with the exception of the Vardarelli, the bandit chiefs, and of a few others, the robbers of the Ponte di Bovino were abominable, disgusting, and utterly detestable monsters—sunk, by their crimes and excesses, and the habitual practices of their daily lives, beneath the level of the beasts of the forests, where they concealed themselves.

Though they carefully shunned, they could not always escape encounters with the Government troops, or with individuals who had courage to defend themselves; and to cure the wounds they received in these conflicts, and those (perhaps quite as frequent) they inflicted on each other in their *risse*, or quarrels, they had no surgeon—no appropriate dressings or medicines; so that a wound that would have been no ways dangerous in the hands of skill, often proved mortal to them, and the bodies and members of many of them were

literally covered with nauseous, festering sores, produced by neglect or injudicious treatment.\*

\* In 1817, before General Church had cleared those provinces of their "perilous stuff," I saw at Nardo, (a considerable town between Lecce and Gallipoli,) the body of a robber who had been shot by some *gens-d'armes*. It was stripped, and exposed in the Market-place, with merely a dirty and ragged sheet thrown over it. The wound that had occasioned his death was from a bullet, and had nothing very appalling in its appearance—merely a hole, not large enough *then* to admit a pea, with a blue ring round it; but there were several old wounds such as described in the text, that gave the most disgusting appearance to the body. There was a priest, or perhaps only a priest's understrapper, standing by it, with a wooden box in his hand, and clamouring for *grani*, (or halfpennies) to relieve the robber's soul from purgatory. Of the crowd that was gathered on the spot, for it was a Market-day, the greater part seemed to avoid the body, as something likely to produce ill luck; but I observed that those who approached it, almost without exception, said *poveriello* (poor creature!) and were much more touched with pity at his fate than indignation at his crimes. The robber was a middle-aged man—his figure rather denoted lightness and activity than muscular strength. There was a small wooden cross, ornamented with mother-of-pearl, and a reliquary, with the figure of the Virgin, round his neck—not placed there by the priests, but the robber's habitual and cherished companions; for it is among the horrid features of Italian and Spanish brigandism, that religious superstition is nearly always allied with crime, and, almost without exception, the

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The gash in the head of my worthy interlocutor, Passo di Lupo, had been cured (so he informed me) by the application of some cotton that had been rubbed against a miraculous statue of a Madonna in the town of Canosa. But he had been less fortunate with a wound in his left arm, that had nearly occasioned his losing the use of it, and which now, so long after, he was endeavouring to rectify with that panacea of the Neapolitan peasantry—an enormous blister, which covered it from the shoulder-blade almost to the elbow-joint. This is the *resumé* of all that I remember interesting in the recital of the ex-brigand; but, lest an interest may have arisen in my reader as to his own fate, I may add, that he was received in my friend's service, in which he comported himself in such a manner as to justify the factor's eulogium. The last time I saw him, he was one of a small escort that accompanied us by night through the said forests of Monte Gargano.

In looking over the different countries infested by banditti, it will strike us that their existence may almost be reduced to a branch of statistics and

dagger and the cross, or the relic, lie concealed in unholy league on the same bosom. This will be fully shown in the progress of the work.

geography. Certain districts, as formed by nature, seem of themselves to suggest the trades of robbery and piracy; and where the progress of good government, civilization, prosperity, and population have not corrected the dangerous facility, it will be found that robbers and pirates pursue their calling now, as they have done in all ages, in certain spots which offer favourable points of attack and retreat. For example, the mountainous frontier of the Neapolitan kingdom has never been free from robbers, nor the coast of Dalmatia and of Greece from pirates; they have risen and flourished there in all ages, like natural products of the soil. The application of external force can only suppress the evil for awhile; and until the improvements I have mentioned in the people themselves take place, they will never be able wholly to withstand the temptation offered them by their geographical positions. If the reader compare other spots with these two, chosen *par excellence*, he will find the same physical causes producing the same effects, except where they have met with the moral check. Frontiers generally are, of all places, the most obnoxious to brigandism: it is so easy for the criminals to evade pursuit, by constantly keeping themselves (to use a military phrase) *à cheval* on the



line of demarcation of the two countries, and when pursuit is hot in the one, by retreating into the other. If the frontiers are mountainous, it seems almost impossible they can be honest, until the contiguous States are both highly advanced in civilization.

And here it may be remarked, that when a people, through their vices, cease to avail themselves of the natural advantages of a mountainous frontier, these advantages become curses; the rugged rocks and deep narrow passes, whence they ought to have defied invading armies, will be peopled with cut-throats of their own; and the bulwarks of national liberty, to which every eye ought to be directed with pride and conscious security, will be converted into strong-holds of banditti, and regarded with fear and trembling. Where a country is divided into many little states, and has a large portion of mountainous territory withal, like Italy, matters are likely to be so much the worse, in proportion to the number of frontiers. There the traveller is not only exposed to the certain vexations arising from custom-house and police officers, and changes of currency, but to the probable and more serious annoyance of robbers, at nearly every transit from one petty state to another. He will find even that

a country such as Tuscany, all order and honesty in its interior, has brigands on its frontiers.

There is a closer connexion between custom-house officers and banditti than at first strikes the eye. The former are placed along a frontier to prevent smuggling, and the men who carry on the dangerous but profitable trade of defrauding them, are very apt to unite the calling of robbery with smuggling, and to merge into brigands. From one infraction of the law to another is but a step; and it must be remarked, that many Governments are infinitely more severe to the smugglers, who cheat them of their revenue, than to the banditti, who only plunder their subjects. When I was in Spain, it was notorious that the robber on the highway, that even the murderer, who fell into the hands of—I cannot say justice—the authorities, had a much better chance of escaping punishment, than the runners of tobacco. This was because tobacco, as in most of the countries of the Continent, was a Royal monopoly. It cannot, therefore, excite surprise that the Spanish contrabanderos, particularly when irritated by seizures of their goods, and by losses and pursuit, should unite to an offence against the laws of customs and excise, which met with the surest and severest punishment, a crime,

which of itself was less harshly visited, and which could scarcely augment the punishment incurred by smuggling when superadded to it.

The conquest of the whole, or a part of a country, by a foreign race, leads very naturally to brigandism. Not to multiply examples, this was the case in Spain, on the conquest of the Moors; and in the Calabrias, which, for many centuries, saw the kingdom of which it formed a part, in the hands of foreign conquerors; now one race, now another; now the Spaniards, now the French—and all odious.

During the last war, even, it was not always easy for an impartial observer to draw a line between the guerillas and freebooters in Spain, and the patriots and brigands in Calabria, and other parts of the Italian peninsula. It could hardly be expected that the French should make a very delicate distinction! According to them, they were *all*, and at all times, robbers, which was false; but it is perfectly true, particularly in Italy, that many unfortunate counter-revolutionists became so under the force of circumstances, and continued so, in part, when the circumstances had ceased to exist.

It may be remarked here, and it will be amply shown in the course of the narratives, that the

abuse of the Catholic religion, with its confessions and absolutions, has tended indirectly to promote crime. But priests and monks have not done half the mischief which has been perpetrated by ballad-mongers, and story-tellers, and popular traditions, that have made the adventures of famous outlaws one of their favourite and principal subjects, and have described them rather with an eye to effect, than to truth or morality.

Throughout Italy these ballads and stories are almost as numerous as accounts of miracles and legends of Saints. They are among the first things learned in childhood; their continual repetition familiarises the mind with lawless deeds, whilst their spirit of adventure has a strong fascination for a very sensitive and a very ignorant people.

“Let who will make the laws of a country,” says the Scotch patriot, Fletcher of Saltoun, “let me make the ballads, and I will form the people.” A little reflection will show how much is contained in this remark. Were a proof required to support it, I would point to the nature of the general run of Italian ballads and to the character of the Italian people. And were I a despot as potent as a Chinese emperor,\* I would decree the

\* An emperor of China actually made a decree by which *all*

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destruction of all their ballads relating to brigandism, and would punish every teller of a story or a tradition on that subject—at least until the country were civilized, when they might be “said and sung” with no more evil consequences than attend the singing or recital of “Johnnie Armstrong,” or “The bold Robin Hood,” among us.

It is of course in the Roman and Neapolitan states, where, of all Italy, banditti have most flourished, that this species of ballad most abounds—where it is a consequence, and a cause.

Mrs. Maria Graham, now Mrs. Calcot, to whom I am happy at this early stage of my labours to acknowledge my obligations, gives in the Appendix to her delightful work, “Three Months passed in the Mountains East of Rome,” a list of some of the especial favourites of the Roman populace, with translations of passages from them. She might have made the list much longer,\* but I shall avail myself here only of two of those she has given, books (except a few sacred ones) written before his time, were to be committed to the flames.

\* “The list might be swelled to a volume, but the very titles of most of them are disgusting repetitions of murders, which must, by the frequency of their recurrence, degrade those whose constant amusement is derived from their perusal.”—*Maria Graham.*

which will explain my meaning as to their effects, and show the nature of the banditti-ballad.

1. *A new History, in which is related the life led by Giuseppe Mastrilli, of Terracina, who, being in love, committed many murders, and was banished from the States of Rome and Naples, on pain of being drawn and quartered; and who, having escaped during his life from the hands of Justice, died quietly in his bed, repenting of his evil deeds.*

This is the opening of the piece I have heard sung a thousand times; the version is from Mrs. Calcot's volume.

“ Nella bella città di Terracina  
Nacque quest' uomo di sottil ingegno  
Ricco di beni, e pieno di dottrina,  
Stupore in Roma e pregiudizio al regno.  
Menò la vita sua da Paladino;  
Sempre contro la corte ebbe l' impegno  
Li misfatti che fece, e il suo furore  
Causa già fu per contentare amore.

Passò un giorno Mastrilli da una strada,  
Vide ad una finestra una zitella,  
Parve agli occhi suoi sì bella e grata  
Candida più che mattutina stella;

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L' ha con un bacio mano salutata  
E poi amorosamente glì favella  
Vide suo padre e per saziar sue voglie  
Li fece dir, che la volea per moglie."

" Within fair Terracina's beauteous bound  
Was born a man, whose like is seldom found ;  
In substance rich, and full of learned lore,  
Terror of Rome, and Naples troubling sore.  
He led a life as free as those of old  
Hight Paladins ; but all his actions bold  
Were levell'd against justice : these, howe'er,  
With all his crimes, were for a lady fair.

One morn it chanced that Mastrilli must pass  
Near where an open window show'd a lass,  
That to his charmed eye seem'd fairer far,  
And brighter than the early morning star.  
By signs he made his admiration known,  
And spoke of love, and hoped to make his own  
The lovely maid ; then to her father went,  
And for the wedding sought his due consent."

Unfortunately for Peppe Mastrilli and mankind, this " Gentle Zitella " was inspired with a passion for another. No sooner had Peppe made this discovery than he killed his rival, and thus began in an essentially Italian manner his career of crime. The father of the murdered lover went to Frosinone and laid his complaint before the Bishop, who sent

twelve sbirri to apprehend Mastrilli, with the promise of three hundred crowns reward in case of their succeeding.

“ From Frosinone speedily were sent  
Twelve sbirri, arm'd with desperate intent,  
A brave lieutenant, and a skilful spy,  
To show where Peppe Mastrilli did lie.”

But they did not succeed. They tracked him to his hiding-place near Cisterna, and met him as he was coming out of a wood belonging to the Prince of Caserta. Instead of fleeing, the desperate homicide, invoking the aid of the Madonna, attacked the sbirri and killed four of the twelve. The rest, with the lieutenant at their head, ran away. Peppe then did what was natural for him to do in such circumstances; he fled to the frontier to seek a refuge in the kingdom of Naples, which States he speedily entered, after killing two guards, and made his way towards Gaeta. In the neighbourhood of that city he entered the hut of a poor fisherman whose wife had just been brought to bed of a son, to whom, wishing to secure his host's assistance, he stood godfather, after telling his story, which must have convinced the fisherman and his dame, that Peppe Mastrilli, the murderer,



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was well calculated to take upon himself the office of Christian sponsor. The fisherman desired him to eat and drink, while he went out to attend his boat;—but he went straight and betrayed Peppe, who was taken, loaded with chains, and sent on board the galleys. But only three days after, when he artfully told his story to “The General of the Galley-slaves,” that distinguished personage ordered his irons to be struck off, and advanced him to the command of twelve hundred of his fellows. When seven years, however, had passed, the Court of Rome demanded the criminal: and Peppe was again bound, and sent by sea towards Rome. It happened that a certain Princess was going at the same time in another galley, and being alarmed during a storm, she insisted on landing: she saw—she pitied the state of Peppe Mastrilli, and commanded that he should be instantly liberated. Very opportunely, this happened close to Terracina, the murderer’s native place. The outlaw knocked at his own door, where his two sons received him with transports of joy. To these “chips of the old block” he related his adventures since the time that love and murder had driven him from home; and forthwith, father and sons set off for Gaeta to take vengeance on the

perfidious fisherman—" who had sinned against St. John the Baptist, by betraying his child's god-father." It need hardly be added that they murdered him barbarously.

Their next exploit, which showed that Peppe Mastrilli was not so grateful as he was resentful, was to waylay and capture the General of the galleys, for whom they obtained a ransom of three thousand golden crowns. Thus enriched, Mastrilli acted as a faithful guide to Prince Corsini in a perilous journey; in reward for which the Prince gave him his letters of protection. He might now have led a peaceful life, but, meeting shortly after some travelling merchants on the road, the temptation was too strong for him, and he divided their property with them. For this, certain rivals in the trade denounced him to the court. Peppe and his sons were pursued by sbirri: they gave battle, and

“ For full four hours on that eventful day,  
Each Christian trembled that around them lay :  
A sky of lead, an earth of fire was seen,  
And nine bold men lay dead upon the green.”

After this dreadful combat, Mastrilli and his sons went to Rome, whence, having obtained fresh letters of protection, they repaired to Leghorn. At Leghorn they found a ship ready to sail, and

embarked in her for Terracina. Arrived once more at his native place, an illness which had attacked Peppe at sea, increased so much, that he sent for a priest and confessed himself. Lest the priest should reveal his crimes, Mastrilli's sons kept the holy man a close prisoner till their father expired.

As soon as the officer of the *sbirri* heard of Peppe's demise, he went to the house in which he had died, fired at the corpse, and then cut off the head to obtain the reward. His sons, in great grief at these events, prevail on the priest to write to Rome, to certify that Mastrilli had confessed, and received absolution before death;—upon which the false officer is condemned to the galleys, and the memory of Mastrilli cleared from the stain of an impenitent death.

Such is the story of the most popular of all the brigand ballads, and being rounded off, by confession and absolution, it makes the robber and murderer an object of sympathy and admiration to the populace. To say nothing of what they deem the inevitable fate of the deceased in another world, the poor Italians think there is more disgrace in this, attached to an impenitent death, or death without confession, than to all the crimes, however atrocious.

cious or disgusting they may be, a man can crowd into his life. And this disgrace, they think, falls upon a man's descendants and relations.

2. *The most beautiful History of the life and death of Pietro Mancino, Chief of Banditti; wherein are set forth the captures for ransom, and the murders that he committed in the kingdom of Naples.*

Many of these ballads open after the classical fashion, with a regular invocation of the Muses: the present begins thus:—

“ Io canto li ricatti, e il fiero ardire  
 Del gran Pietro Mancino fuoruscito,  
 Quanti nemici suoi facea morire  
 In tutto il tempo ch'è stato bandito ;  
 Perdonatemi Muse, in questo dire  
 Se non vi chiamo all' Eliconio sito  
 Che parlando di guerra, mie carte  
 Di Bellona la Musa, Apollo è Marte.”

Peter Mancino, that great outlaw'd man  
 I sing, and all his rage—and how he ran  
 Throughout the land, seeking his foes to slay,  
 Or take, and on them ransom hard to lay.  
 Forgive, O Muse ! if, in my dire account,  
 I call thee not from Heliconian fount !  
 So fierce my tale, Mars must Apollo be,  
 And harsh Bellona is the muse for me.

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“And, indeed,” as Mrs. Calcot observes, “Pietro Mancino deserves a loftier song than most banditti.” He was the son of a learned and much respected physician, and, as well as his two sisters, remarkable for his personal beauty. Here, again, we have a truly Italian beginning. The beauty of his sisters inflamed the passions of two Princes of the land, and it was to save them from their lust, that Pietro Mancino committed his first murders on the persons of the said Princes. The next natural step was to turn robber, and, according to the ballad, as he could not hope for mercy, seeing the rank of his victims, he fled and joined a band of bold outlaws. He ought to have respected his father’s profession ; but his first victim in his new calling was a Doctor: he next seized a Factor. From each of these he received three thousand crowns of ransom,—with part of which he succoured persons in distress, and more particularly *women*. The Prince of San Severo, a powerful Neapolitan nobleman, offered a reward of twelve thousand crowns for the head of Pietro Mancino. This handsome sum Pietro determined to obtain himself, keeping his head on his own shoulders. Accordingly, he disguised himself, and taking a raw sheep’s head under his mantle, went to the Prince, and

having only partially shown the blooded sheep's head, received the money. When he got it safe in his clutches, he laughed at the Prince, and informed him of the cheat that had been practised upon him. He then hastened to his companions, and having made their slight preparations, they embarked altogether for the coast of Dalmatia, where they lived in a generous and most hospitable manner. When their means drew near exhaustion, they crossed the Adriatic sea, landed on the coast of Apulia, and made incursions in that province to raise more money. Their first exploit on their return to Italy, was to disguise themselves as monks, and to visit the head of a rich monastery, from whom they obtained three thousand crowns. (It must be remarked, that three thousand crowns—*tre mila scudi*—is a pet sum with the Italian writers of banditti songs.) There was a traitor in the band, who had arranged a plan for betraying the captain; but the dextrous Pietro Mancino not only detected this Judas, but forced him to pay him twice three thousand crowns. Shortly after this he intercepted half a million of gold, on its way to the Viceroy of Naples; and being now well provided with funds for the support of his generous and hospitable mansion across the Adri-

atic, he retreated through the province of Apulia, to Barletta, and embarked again for Dalmatia, where he had a stately castle, and where he continued to live like a beneficent Prince. When the conquering Turks besieged Corfu, he assisted the Christians in the defence of that island. At length, just like Peppe Mastrilli, he was taken ill, and in due course,

A Pietro intanto il male si aggravava  
E da se stesso lo conosceva  
Che giorno e notte chiamava, e pregava  
Per avvocata Maria, che teneva,  
Perchè sempre il sabbato guardava  
E mai peccato non vi commetteva.  
Maria chiamava, e bagnava le gote  
Rese l'anima à Dio col sacerdote.

Peter meanwhile perceived the time draw nigh,  
When he must make his soul prepare to die,  
And night and day he call'd on Heaven's queen,  
His advocate, to whom he'd faithful been;  
And still had kept her day from sin most clear,  
And Saturdays alone, throughout the year,  
He wrought no ill. On Mary then he cried,  
And weeping with his priest, in penance died.\*

\* Mrs. Calcot gives in her list,

*"The unfortunate Life and miserable Death of Harry Gobertinco, highwayman, who killed nine hundred and sixty-*

These two ballads are by far the greatest favourites of this much-admired class of composition. They are, of course, as well known in the Neapolitan kingdom as at Rome and in the States of the Church. They are sung in a sort of recitative, monotonous *cantilena* style, which is not very pleasant as music, but which permits every word to be most distinctly heard. Long as they are, (and I have heard a version of Peppe Mastrilli longer than "Chevy Chase,") they rivet the attention of their audience, as though their words were magical spells. I have often seen a group of peasants gathered round an ambulatory lyrist, and never take their eyes from him, nor move, nor speak, until the robber chief was confessed, absolved, and fairly dead, when shouts of applause, and the dona-

*four persons, with six children, in the territory of Trent."* And she adds: "The most remarkable thing in this atrocious history is the regret of the ruffian, that he had not lived long enough to kill one thousand of his fellow-creatures, according to an oath he had made. He entered every murder, with its date and circumstances, in a journal book." There is, doubtlessly, in this, a pleasant exaggeration of the ballad-monger's; but a friend of mine once saw near Oporto, a notorious assassin, who had regularly cut a notch on the handle of his knife, for every victim that had fallen beneath its blade. His number, however, fell far short of a thousand. I think it was only six or seven.



tions of fractions of a penny, would testify their extreme delight.

The Neapolitans have also many robber stories in prose and verse, exclusively their own. Among these the most famous are about Frà Diavolo, or Friar-Devil, of whom I shall say a word or two, anon; Marcone, of Calabria, who styled himself "King Marcone;" "Benedetto Mangone, of Eboli," and "Marco Sciarra, of the Abruzzi," whose adventures I shall give at length, as (unlike the others,) they are detailed in history.

The story of Benedetto Mangone is, indeed, a *bonne bouche* in its way, as related in the popular manner, where history is mingled with tradition.

The scene of his exploits was principally the Campagna d' Eboli, in which the sublime ruins of the temples of Pæstum stand, and "where," says the historian Giannone, "his memory is still fresh and infamous, from the number of atrocious crimes he there committed. He is said to have made the temples of the Greek divinities, which were then, and long after his time, surrounded with thick woods, like those that now grow around Persano, his headquarters, and to have sacrificed the victims of his revenge, and such as could not pay their ransoms, in those once holy recesses, which became human

shambles. He ended his crimes, as, in all probability, he had begun them, through love.

He was taken by the soldiers of the Spanish Viceroy, who then ruled the kingdom of Naples, as he was attempting to decoy, or force a beautiful peasant girl from the town of Salerno. On arriving at the city of Naples, to the very gates of which he had often carried terror, he was most barbarously tortured, and then beaten to death with hammers.

I remember being in the neighbourhood of Eboli, shortly after the murder of Mr. and Mrs. Hunt, which was perpetrated unintentionally by some novices and bunglers in brigandism, near to the temples of Pæstum, in 1823. It was before the criminals were taken. On speaking with some honest peasants on the subject, and describing to them (what I had seen and admired, only a few days before, on a gay excursion to Mount Vesuvius,) the youth, the beauty, and happiness of the English couple, who were both killed by one ball, they shook their heads, and said it must have been either the devil, or another Benedetto Mangone, who had done the deed. A hundred years and more had passed since Giannone had written, but the robber's fame was fresh as ever.

The great civilizers of countries are your road-

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makers. A MacAdam in Calabria would do more in suppressing banditti than twenty sanguinary governors, such as the French General Manhes, whose proceedings I shall have occasion to detail. Wherever good communications have been opened, the brigands have gradually withdrawn. This I have seen myself in Calabria, in Apulia, and in the Abruzzi. That this indeed *should* be the case will strike everybody, but it is so in a degree which can hardly be understood by those who have not seen it. The sight of a new broad road seems to produce the same bewildering, terrifying impression on an Italian robber, that the magical mirror of Ruggiero did on the eyes of his enemies. There must certainly be some superstitious dread mingled with the reasonable apprehensions of these robbers—some *jettatura*,\* attached in their idea, to new roads.

I remember once having to pass a district (not

\* A superstition much more common among the Neapolitans than that of the evil-eye among the people of the Levant, and more absurd. It may be said to be a mysterious influence proceeding from things animate and inanimate, and producing bad luck, but it would take a volume to describe it. There exists, indeed, a volume on the subject (and an amusing one it is!) by the Neapolitan Advocate, Nicolo Valletta.

far from Taranto, the ancient Tarentum) which had long borne an infamous reputation. On speaking to a gentleman of the country, he assured me there was now no grounds for apprehension—that the Government had finished a *strada nuova* three months before, and that not a single robbery had been heard of since. Indeed, I almost invariably observed in travelling in the provinces of the kingdom of Naples, that the spirits of my guides or muleteers revived as we came to a bit of new road, and that they spoke of it as a haven of safety.

Hoping these brief general observations may not have fatigued the reader's patience, I shall now proceed to the most amusing and authentic narratives of banditti I can collect, begging him to bear in mind, that robbers, like the heroes before the time of Homer, are frequently lost in obscurity—that history has disdained to record their exploits, which are only to be collected in the scenes which witnessed them, and from the occasional accounts of travellers.

## THE ROBBER OF THE ABRUZZI.

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“OF no avail,” says the excellent Neapolitan historian Giannone, “was the horrid spectacle of the tortures and death of the chief Mangone; for very shortly after the kingdom was disturbed by the incursions of the famous Marco Sciarra, who, imitating Marcone of Calabria, called himself ‘*Re della Campagna*,’ or ‘King of the open country,’ and asserted his Royal prerogative at the head of six hundred robbers.”

Favoured by his position in the mountains of the Abruzzi, and on the confines of another government—the Papal States, which for many years have been the promised land of brigandism—this extraordinary robber attained the highest eminence in his profession. His band, so formidable in itself, always acted in concert with other bands of banditti in the Roman States; they aided each other by arms and council; and in case of the Romans

being pressed on their side, they could always retreat across the frontier line to their allies in the Abruzzi, while, in the same predicament, the Abruzzese could claim the hospitality of the worthy subjects of the Pope.

The same circumstances have strengthened the banditti in our own days, and rendered the country between Terracina and Fondi, or the frontiers of the Papal States, and the Kingdom of Naples, the most notorious district of all Italy for robbers.

But Marco Sciarra was moreover favoured by other circumstances, and he had the grasp of mind to comprehend their importance, to avail himself of them, and to raise himself to the grade of a political partizan—perhaps he aimed at that of a patriot. His native country, as we have explained in the foregoing narrative, was in the hands of foreigners, and most despotically governed by Viceroyalty from Spain, who were generally detested by the people, and frequently plotted against by some of the nobility, who, instead of assisting to put down the *fuorusciti*, would afford them countenance and protection, when required, in their vast and remote estates. A great part of the rest of Italy was almost as badly governed as the Kingdom, and consequently full of malcontents, of men

of desperate fortunes, who, in many instances, forwarded the operations of the robbers, and not unfrequently joined their bands. An accession like theirs added intelligence, military skill, and political knowledge, to the cause of the rude mountaineers of the Abruzzi.

In the course of a few months after the death of Benedetto Mangone, Marco Sciarra had committed such ravages, and made himself so formidable, that the whole care of the Government was absorbed by him, and every means in its power employed for his destruction.

In the spring of 1588, he had retreated with his band, before a force of Government troops, into the States of the Church, which the Vice-Royalists could not invade without the permission of the Pope. In the month of April the Viceroy, Don Giovan di Zunica Conte di Miranda, applied to the Holy See for an immediate renewal of an old *concordaty*, by which the commissaries and the troops of either government were authorised to have free ingress and egress in the Neapolitan Kingdom and the Papal States, to pursue robbers, crossing the respective frontiers as often as might be necessary, and by which the two States were pledged reciprocally to aid each other in the laudable duty

of suppressing all bandits, and bad livers. (Mal viventi.) The Pope, Sixtus VI. complied with this reasonable request, by granting a Breve for three months. Immediately the troops of the Viceroy Miranda crossed the frontiers in pursuit of Sciarra, who, being properly informed by numerous friends and spies of all that passed, turned back into the kingdom about the same time that his enemies quitted it; and avoiding the pass of Antrodoro, where the Spaniards were in force, he went through the defile of Tagliacozzi, and was soon safe in the mountain solitudes that surround the beautiful lake of Celano.

The robber had the sympathies of all the peasantry on his side, and found friends and guides everywhere. Not so the Spanish commander in pursuit of him, who did not learn whereabout he was until several days after, when some fugitive soldiers brought him word that Marco Sciarra was in the Kingdom, and had just sacked the town of Celano, cutting to pieces a detachment of troops that had arrived there. The Spaniard then recrossed the frontier of the Kingdom, but nearly a whole day before he reached the country about Celano, Sciarra was again beyond the borders.

He had now, however, considerable difficulties



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to encounter. The officer had left a body of bold men behind him in the Papal States, and these had been joined by several commissaries of the Pope, who each led a number of soldiers, and carried with him his Holiness's command to the faithful, not to harbour, but to assist to take the Neapolitan banditti wherever they might be. Sciarrarra had not expected so formidable an array on the side of Rome against him: he was several times hard pressed by the troops, but the peasantry, spite of the injunctions of the successor of Saint Peter, still continued his faithful friends. The historians who relate these events, especially record that, wherever he went, the robber was kind in conversation and generous in action with the poor, giving, but never taking from them; and paying for whatever his band took with much more regularity than did the officers of the Spanish troops. Consequently he was advised by some peasant or other of the approach of every foe, of every ambuscade of the troops, of every movement they made; and he finally escaped them all, keeping two forces, which might almost be called armies, at bay, the one on the Roman confine, the other on the Neapolitan, for more than a week.

He then threw himself back on the mountains

of Abruzzi, where, by keeping himself in the most inaccessible places, with his men scattered in the most opportune spots, and regular sentinels stationed and guards distributed, he had invariably the advantage over the enemy. Indeed, whenever the troops mustered courage to approach his strong-holds, which he was in the habit of changing frequently, they were sure to return considerably diminished in number, and without the satisfaction, not only of killing, but even of seeing one of the robbers, whose arquebuses from behind rocks, or the shelter of forests and thickets, had so sure an aim.

Six months passed—the soldiers were worn out. The Spanish officer, who first led them on the useless hunt, was dead in consequence of a wound received from the robbers. Winter approached, which is felt in all its rigour on the lofty bleak mountains of the Abruzzi; the commissaries with their men, on the other side, had long since returned to their homes at Rome; and the Viceroy's people now went to theirs at Naples.

After these transactions, Marco Sciarra was deemed all but invincible: his fame sung in some dozen of ballads, strengthened his *prestige* in the eyes of the peasantry: his band was reinforced,

Banditti and Robbers.



MARCO SCIARRA AND TASSO.



and he was left to reign a King, at least of the Abruzzi, and undisturbed for many months.

It was about this time that the robber-chief's life was ornamented with its brightest episode. Marco and his merry men had come suddenly on a company of travellers on the road between Rome and Naples. The robbers had begun to plunder, and had cut the saddle-girths of the mules and horses of the travellers, who had speedily obeyed the robbers' order, and lay flat on the earth, all save one, a man of a striking and elegant appearance.

"Faccia in terra!" cried several of the robbers in the same breath, but the bold man, heedless of their menaces, only stepped up to Marco their chief, and said, "I am Torquato Tasso." "The poet!" said the robber, and he dropped on his knee, and kissed his hand; and not only was Tasso saved from being plundered by the mere mention of his name, but all those who were travelling with him were permitted to mount their horses and continue their journey without sustaining the loss of a single scudo. A very curious proof this, that a captain of banditti could form a juster and more generous notion of what was due to the immortal, but then unfortunate poet, than could Princes of royal or imperial lineage.

The Viceroy was stung to the quick by the failure of his expedition, of whose success he had been so certain, that the Court of Spain was given to understand their kingdom of Naples had nothing more to fear from the incursions of banditti; that the head of Marco Sciarra would soon decorate one of the niches in the Capuan gate. But Miranda was a man of energy, and in 1590 he renewed his attempt to exterminate the robbers. Four thousand men, between infantry and cavalry, marched this time into the Abruzzi, under the command of Don Carlo Spinelli. As the Abruzzese peasantry saw this formidable army enter their pastoral districts by Castel di Sangro, and traverse the mountain flat, "the plain of five miles," they whispered "The will of God be done! but now it is all over with King Marco!"

Marco Sciarra, however, had no such fears: but came boldly on to an open battle. With his increased forces he threw himself upon Spinelli in the midst of the Viceroy's troops, which were presently disordered; he wounded with his own hand the proud Don, who turned and fled, but so severely wounded, that he was well nigh leaving his life in the mountains whither he had gone to take that of Sciarra. The soldiers followed their com-

mander as best they could, leaving the robbers the full triumph of the field.

Marco Sciarra's courage and audacity were now increased a hundred-fold. He fancied he could conquer a kingdom; he invaded other provinces, and marching across the mountains of the Abruzzi, he traversed those of the Capitanata, sacking, without meeting with opposition, the towns of Serra Capriola and Vasto. Nor did he stop here: for he descended into the vast plain of Apulia, and took and pillaged the city of Lucera, a very considerable place, situated near the edge of the plain. The Bishop of Lucera, who fled for refuge to one of the church towers, was unfortunately shot, as he presented himself at a window or loop-hole to see what was passing. Without being molested by any attack of the government troops, Marco Sciarra's band leisurely returned from this extensive predatory excursion, loaded with booty, to their Abruzzi mountains, which overlooked Rome, where their enterprising chief renewed his league with the banditti in the States of the Pope, and encouraged them by the flattering picture of his splendid successes. But he had allies more important and dignified than these. The politics of States now became mixed up with his fate.

Alfonso Piccolomini, a nobleman by birth, but one of the many desperate revolutionists Italy has been fertile in the production of—a rebel to his Sovereign the Grand-Duke of Tuscany—had fled to Venice, where he obtained service as a soldier of fortune in the army with which that Republic was then waging war with the Uscocchi. This man was enchanted with the stand Sciarra had made against the Pope and the Viceroy, neither of whom, at the time, was in good odour at Venice; and he induced the crafty senators to wink at his corresponding with, and favouring the bold Abruzzese, if he did not even do more, and (working on their jealousies of the power of the Spaniards and of the Pope in Italy,) persuade them to assist the outlaw themselves with money and arms.

Marco Sciarra was every day gaining importance and strength by these manœuvres, when a curious change took place. Here I intreat attention to the vindictive feelings, the utter want of principle, of decency, that marked the proceedings of Princes and Potentates in Italy in those days.

The Grand Duke of Tuscany, entertaining the most revengeful feelings against his rebel subject, made it a matter of embassy and degrading supplication to the Venetians that they would not only



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dismiss from their service, but drive out from their States, Alfonso Piccolomini. But Piccolomini, it was replied, was a man of talent, and as a soldier they were well satisfied with his services.

Marco Sciarra, the Abruzzese (he did not blush to propose a brigand!) was the better man of the two to carry on their wars against the Uscocchi; rejoined the Duke, who did all he could to make them substitute him for Piccolomini. The Venetians, however, turned a deaf ear to these representations, and the Tuscan refugee could defy the wrath of his sovereign as long as he enjoyed their protection. But in an evil hour Piccolomini returned a haughty, if not an insulting answer to the Capi or heads of that mysterious, sanguinary Government. The Senators of Venice were almost as vindictive as the Duke of Tuscany; they dismissed him from their service, and drove him out of their States—when he fell into the snares laid for him by his own sovereign, who put him to a violent death.

The Oligarchy of Venice then thought of Sciarra, and sent to invite him to their service. He was to prosecute the war against the Uscocchi. But Sciarra, for the present, turned as deaf an ear to their proposals as they had at first done to that of

the Grand Duke's, and remained where he was—the lord of the Abruzzi.

He was not long, however, in finding that in the death of Piccolomini, who had so materially assisted him, he had sustained a severe loss, and Sciarra's fortunes were still more overcast when Pope Sixtus died and was succeeded by a better or more active Pontiff, Clement VIII. The new Pope shared all the feelings of the Viceroy of Naples, as far as regarded the banditti, whom he determined to extirpate in his States. To this end he dispatched Gianfrancesco Aldobrandini against them, with a permanent commission.

By a simultaneous movement a large body of the Viceroy's troops entered the Abruzzi. The command of this, with absolute power, was given to Don Adriano Acquaviva, Count of Conversano, a nobleman of courage and very admirable prudence. The first thing he attempted, and without which little indeed could be done in that wild country of mountains and forests, was to conciliate the affections of the peasantry, who had been so insulted and oppressed by all his stupid predecessors in office, and the soldiery, that they could not but wish well to their enemies, the robbers. The Count, therefore, abstained from quartering his troops in

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the villages; he imitated the conduct of Sciarra, and made them pay for whatever they consumed; he listened to the complaints of the aggrieved, and at last he so gained on the affections and better principles of the peasants, that they conspired with him for the extermination of the very banditti whom they had so often guided and concealed. With them, as guides, the soldiery had now a key to the mysteries and recesses of the mountains and forests.

Thus deprived of the protection of Piccolomini, pressed by Aldobrandini on the one side and by Conversano on the other, Marco Sciarra was fain to reflect on the tender made to him by the Venetian Senators, and finally to accept the rank and service they offered him. They must still have thought him and those he could bring with him well worth having, for they dispatched two galleys of the Republic for their conveyance. In these ships Marco Sciarra embarked with sixty of his bravest and most attached followers, and, turning his back on his native mountains, sailed up the Adriatic to Venice.

As soon as the Count of Conversano was informed of the robber-chief's departure, he blessed his stars that the kingdom was quit of so danger-

ous a subject, and, thinking now his business was over, returned to Naples, where the Viceroy received him in triumph.

But the expatriating bandit left a brother behind him in the mountains of the Abruzzi; and Luca Sciarra, in due time gathered together the scattered bands, and commenced operations anew with considerable vigour. Meanwhile Marco and his men, who in their quality of subsidiaries served the Venetian Republic very much to its satisfaction, corresponded with their former comrades at home. Marco's glory could not be forgotten! The soul of their body was at Venice—everything of importance was fomented by him, and he frequently employed his "leaves of absence" in visiting them, and leading them, as of yore, in the more hazardous of their enterprises.

He had now been heard of so long—his deeds had been so desperate but successful, he had escaped so many dangers, that people concluded he must bear "a charmed life." His long impunity might almost have made him think so himself, when, landing one day in the marches of Ancona, between the mountains of the Abruzzi and that town, where the Pope's Commissary Aldobrandini still remained, he was met by a certain Bat-

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timello, to whom, as to an old follower, his heart warmed—with open arms he rushed to embrace him—and received a traitor's dagger in that heart.

Battimello had sold himself to Aldobrandini, and received for himself and thirteen of his friends, a free pardon from the Papal Government for his treachery.

For some years after the death of Marco Sciarra, there was a pause in his profession, whose spirit had expired with him. Other times brought other robbers, but his fame has scarcely ever been equalled—never surpassed.

## THE BRIGANDS OF CALABRIA.

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THE French, with the vigour and unscrupulousness of a Military Government, might, at a later period, and indeed did, materially put down brigandism in Italy; but one of the fruits of their first invasion was a temporary state of society particularly well adapted to the renewal and increase of those associations.

The Republican armies spread themselves over the Piedmontese and Milanese territories, preaching liberty and equality. The enviable equality in the eyes of the poor and ignorant orders of the Italians, was that of property; and when they saw their instructors the French frequently confounding the *meum* and *tuum* in public matters, they were too apt to follow their example in private ones. Many of these men, moreover, were shamefully used by the invaders—and driven to desperation. Many, perhaps, in the north of Italy as in

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the south, detested the French and the French system generally. Among the northern Italians there was, indeed, considerable national spirit, and in the absence of energy in their own Government, certain daring individuals thought, by throwing themselves into the mountains and deep valleys, they might check the invaders by a species of Guerilla warfare; and proving too weak for such an operation, they were still strong enough to turn brigands, and these supported themselves for a while on the plunder of the foreigners, and of such as had meanly submitted to their sway, forgetful of their religion and their lawful sovereign. Several trials at the period prove that men thus found an excuse for, or justified their offences. Such a defence could hardly obtain in any court of justice, but among the simple mountaineers and peasantry the plea seemed reasonable and almost honourable. It is worth while to remark, in passing, that the French, with their new Republican doctrines in Italy, were generally well received by the superior class of burghesses, lawyers, physicians, &c. of the great cities, and even by many of the nobility, whose importance and rights their system was to annihilate; but from the mass of the populace, properly so called, even of the great towns, and from the pea-

santry, the oppressed classes, according to their creed, whose condition they were to improve, and whom they were to admit to the *Droits de l'homme*, they never found favour. The French, I am aware, attributed this to their brutal ignorance and superstition; but they themselves showed a woful ignorance of human nature when they expected the poor Italians would take an interest in what they did not understand, and at once throw off all the feelings and prejudices of ages, and renounce their nationality at the apparition of a novel and unsightly idol—the red cap of Liberty.

To the men whose hatred of a foreign invader and whose political feelings led them at this time to brigandism, must of course be added, what was probably a still more numerous class,—those men naturally bad, who availed themselves of the disordered state of the country and other things incidental to war, and those whom that war deprived of their habitual means of existence.

At a later period the introduction of the tyrannical conscription was another source of lawless adventure. Desperate deserters not unfrequently took to the mountains, and preferred living by robbing in their own country, to following the French eagle to rob in Germany, Spain, or Russia. These



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bands had generally but a short duration, and though I have heard of the exploits of their leaders on the spot, in the pass of the Bocchetta behind Genoa, about Gavi, in the mountains of the Riviere, and other points of the Apennines, I retain nothing very peculiar or striking, except the Evan Dhu-like remark of one of them when placed before the French military tribunal at Turin. He had been addressed in what he considered an insulting tone; he raised his arm, made a step forward with his fettered leg, and darting a glance of fire on the officers he said, "*Per Dio ! se fosse nelle mie montagne non parlareste così !*" "By Heavens ! if I were in my mountains again, you would not speak to me in this manner !" But it was in the south of Italy, where men have always been more fiery and lawless; it was in the Abruzzi, and still more particularly in Calabria, that "land of the mountain and the"—brigand, where the French did what Pompey boasted he could do by a stamp of his foot—raise whole legions.

These regenerating conquerors had penetrated as far as Naples; the army had run away, the king and court had run away, only the poor despised lazzaroni of the capital had made anything like a

bold resistance to the entrance of the invaders into the capital, and a puppet, by some degrees more ridiculous than the national Ponchinello, had been got up under the title of "La Republica Partenopea." King Ferdinand, however, for that time had not resigned himself to a long sojourn in Sicily. He knew the antipathy of the populace of his dominions to the French, which was much more vehement than what existed in the north of the Peninsula ; he was aware also, that though his soldiers had proved cowards, there were plentiful elements of bravery and daring, especially among the mountaineers of Calabria and the Abruzzi, which the breath of fanaticism could kindle to a flame ; and he sent over to them, not a general but a priest—the celebrated Cardinal Ruffo, who effected one of the most extraordinary counter-revolutions of modern times.

No sooner had the Cardinal raised the Bourbon banner at the extremity of the Calabrias, than at the call of legitimacy and holy faith, (*Ferdinando e la Santa Fede!*) thousands flocked to it, and swore to purge the kingdom of Frenchmen and Jacobins, and restore their lawful sovereign. Among these multitudes were some who were already nothing more nor less than brigands ; but they had arms in

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their hands, were daring, active, and better acquainted with the country than any other class, and these were not times for the Cardinal to be very particular in the choice of his instruments. He enrolled them, and marched forward, gradually swelling his bands with tributary streams, that dropped in from the mountains. Some of these were pure enough, and only propelled by a simple spirit of loyalty; but it is too notorious to be denied, that many of these Calabrians were banditti, or now acted as such, favoured by the state of things, and afterwards became robbers *en règle*. The march of this most irregular army, headed by a priest—a prince of the holy empire, was signalized by blood and plunder. Wherever a town had shown any attachment or subserviency to the Republicans, the Santa-fedisti made it run with blood, and murder and plunder were not always confined to such sinful or obnoxious places. Soon their shouts of “Viva la Santa Fede!” (Long live the Holy Faith!) were heard before the Neapolitan capital, where it was echoed by the lazzaroni, and the rest of the populace, who rushed out with enthusiasm, that amounted to madness, to join the Cardinal’s standard. The French retreated, and shut themselves up in the castle of Sant’ Elmo,

where they soon capitulated ; but the city became one scene of plunder, destruction, and butchery. Calabrians and lazzaroni were absolute masters of it for many days. They did not leave a palace or a house, whose owners were suspected of jacobinism or republicanism, (they knew no distinction between these two,) un plundered. Unhappy the man in those days, that did not wear a pig-tail ! for a tail was their political criterion. King Ferdinand wore a tail, all the Santa-fedisti wore tails ; but the French did not, and all the Neapolitans, who had cut off theirs, were unredeemable revolutionists, who deserved to have their heads cut off. The madness and ferocity of their hate, in some instances, went to such horrid extremes, that I have been informed on good authority, they were seen to tear out their victims' hearts, and eat them in the public square, before the Royal palace. All this wholesale robbery and murder was performed to the tune of " Viva la Santa Fede !"

" It was curious," said an old Neapolitan nobleman to me, in describing these events, " to see the evil force of example. Men of the lower orders, who had been all their lives quiet honest fellows, who would not have given a blow, nor robbed any one of a *grano*, now joined the general brigandage,

as if they had been all their lives robbers by profession !”

These scenes of horror were chequered, as they always will be, where a semi-barbarous horde and a mob are the actors, by much that was ridiculous and laughable, if the spectators had had any heart for laughing *à la Don Juan*.

A party of the plunderers and Jacobin-hunters one day placed a cannon before the strong and obstinately closed gate of the palace of the Prince d'—— to force it open. Through their ignorance and confusion, they so fired it off, that they did not burst the gates, but swept down several of their companions, whose Calabrian and lazzaroni blood besmeared the walls of the building, whilst the recoil of the gun killed or maimed several others.

On another occasion they seized a gentleman who was on the wrong side of politics, as far as the tail went, but who had prudently provided himself with a false pig-tail. When the *codal* visit was paid, and the *capillary* appendage found in its proper place, they were going to let him pass on as a faithful subject of his Majesty King Ferdinand, but a prying dog of a Calabrian caught hold of the tail, and it came away in his hand ! Here then was a decided *Giacobbo*, who merited death ; but whether

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it was that they had some respect for a man who affected a virtue though he had it not, or whether they were in a funny humour, they determined by acclamation that he should be let off, after eating his tail. Prayers and remonstrances were vain; they thrust the pig-tail in his mouth, and with shouts of laughter were trying to force it down his throat, as Fluellin made Pistol swallow the leek, when a more orderly body of counter-revolutionists came up, and saved him from a curious process of choking.

As they were dragging along another of their prisoners, the worthy old Cavalier di —, a man who ate his macaroni all his life without one revolutionary or political inspiration ever interfering with his digestion, they kicked and cuffed him in the most hearty manner, bawling at him as he went along, *Giacobbo! Giacobbo!* “*Non sono Giacobbo, ma Giobbe, Giobbe, son Giobbe!*”\* said the old man, turning round his patient, suffering countenance upon the mob, who, at length touched by his tranquil, venerable appearance, and by his repeating that he was a Job, to bear their treatment as

\* *Giacobbo* was the Neapolitan for Jacobin. *Giobbe* is good Italian for Job.

he did, liberated him. He lived many years to tell this story, and this piece of allusive alliteration.

It was almost as unfortunate to be convicted of speaking French, as to have no pig-tail. A dear friend of mine, who commenced an extensive experience of the blessings of revolutions and foreign invasions at an early age, was well nigh paying dear for this accomplishment. He was accustomed to speak French with his father, a native of Switzerland, whose maternal language it was, and this principally led to a visit from the Calabrians, who plundered the house, and carried father, mother, and son, before Pane di Grana, one of the chiefs of the counter-revolutionists, and a *ci-devant* brigand.

My friend has introduced this incident in a work of fiction, that contains much that is true, and decidedly the best account of the troublous times of which I am speaking, with an admirably drawn character of Cardinal Ruffo. It is thus he describes Pane di Grana, and the curious tribunal of that robber chief.

“ Under the arched vestibule of the convent of Monte Santo, the massive gates of which were thrown wide open, sat Pane di Grana, a Calabrian chief of some consequence. This man, it was said,

had been a *bandito* for several years, and had infested the high roads of Calabria, where he had, of course, shared a proportion of the misdemeanors of people in his condition. He had plundered, and probably shot the unfortunate travellers, whenever he met with resistance, but only, as *he* considered, in fair action; for the rest, he was not sanguinary nor cruel. He was a middle-aged man, rather short, strongly and squarely built, inclined to corpulency, of a dark complexion, and with a plain, countryman-like countenance, the expression of which had nothing repulsive. On the present occasion he was dressed in a short green jacket of velveteen, a red sash, and leathern belt, holding a dagger and a pair of large pistols; he wore high riding-boots, and a low, slouched hat, with a red cockade on one side, and a tin image of the Virgin in front, stuck in the hatband. He was seated on a long wooden bench, resting his back against the smoky walls of the building; some firelocks, in better order than those the insurgents generally carried, were piled against the wall opposite, and a tattered, soiled white flag, was furled near them. These were the head-quarters and tribunal of the chief. His men were quartered in the convent, refectory, and dormitory. A few straggling monks,



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of the Carmelite order, scared away first by the French unbelievers, and little better treated now by the defenders of the faith, had taken refuge in some obscure recess of the vast building, and left the rest at the disposal of the champions of King and Church, who sometimes plundered both the one and the other—by mistake.”\*

Another celebrated insurgent chief at the time, half-brigand, half-royalist, was the priest or Abbé Proni, whose rifle levelled many a fugitive French republican. My friend had also the fortune, or *misfortune* of an interview with him, which he thus pleasantly describes in a letter to me.

“In November 1799, after the horrors of the revolution and counter-revolution of Naples had somewhat subsided, I left that city with my father on our way to Rome and Tuscany. Boy as I was, the scenes of pillage, violence, and devastation, which I had witnessed, had made a deep impression on my mind, and I felt relieved as we left behind us the last suburbs of that blood-stained capital. But we had not yet done with the insurgents and their feats. We arrived early in the evening at

\* Anselmo : a Tale of Italy. By A. Vieusseux, Author of “Italy and The Italians,” &c. &c. London : Charles Knight  
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Mola di Gaeta, and were ushered into the large dining-room of the locanda, the windows of which look on the beautiful gulf, and the distant islands of Ponza and Ventotene. We found only one person in the room seated at table. He was a stout, square-built man, with a sun-burnt countenance, looking something between a country priest and a farmer. He had apparently just eaten his dinner, and was engaged with his dessert, which consisted of a small dish of *pignoli* (the pine almond) and a flask of wine, and I was much struck with the nicety with which he picked one after the other the diminutive kernels between his big, broad, and not very clean thumb and index. I had an unpleasant recollection of the large sprawling hands of the Calabrians, who had a few months before invaded our quiet dwelling at Naples, destroyed or carried away our moveables, and taken us before their chief to be tried for our lives. The association of my ideas was unfavourable to the dark stranger, and I was glad to see him, after both his plate and his flask were empty, rise and leave the room without saying a word, though not without having cast upon us several scrutinizing glances. But our passports were regular, and we had duly delivered them to the landlord. After the stranger

was gone, my father asked the waiter who that *galantuomo* was? The man looked first to the door to see that he was fairly gone, and then in a sort of whisper he said, *l'Abate Proni*. Now this was the name of a celebrated chief of the insurrection in the Abruzzi, who, after hunting the French and their partisans out of his mountains, had effected his junction with the army of the Faith under Cardinal Ruffo, and contributed to the re-conquest of Naples. Not another word was said; we had in the same house a formidable neighbour, a man whose name had struck terror and spread destruction from the shores of the Adriatic to those of the Mediterranean. But he was now in the regular service of King Ferdinand, and bore the royal commission as Colonel. We slept quietly at the inn, and on starting early next morning, my father understood that Proni had left in the night on some expedition connected with his Majesty's service! Three-and-thirty years have since elapsed, and Proni has long been dead; yet I have still before my mind's eye the dreaded insurgent chief seated at table, quietly picking his *pignoli* in the dining-room of Mola di Gaeta.

"We arrived early next day at the villainous-looking town of Itri, perched on the mountain of

St. Andrea. I almost wish Lady Morgan, who felt so horrified at the appearance of the place, and thought she saw a *bandito* lurking within the threshold of every house, could, without suffering any bodily harm, have seen it as we did then. It was, or rather had just been, the head-quarters of Fra Diavolo and his band, many of whom still remained behind. The narrow, steep, roughly-paved street was strewn with wrecks of carriages, chaises, caleches, and other vehicles, once belonging to the unfortunate French commissaries and other agents, and their Neapolitan partisans, who had been waylaid and murdered at this very place, after the retreat of the French army. Bodies of carriages, wheels, axletrees, &c. were heaped up against the corners of the ruinous-looking houses. We were told that about seventy carriages had been thus served. What had become of the travellers in them we did not inquire—it was easy to guess. In the midst of this delectable scene we remained for three hours, because some part of our own carriage having broken in the ascent of that abominable mountain, we were obliged to have recourse to the Itri blacksmith, who was not very expeditious or skilful. The fear of being benighted before we reached Terracina, in a land swarming with

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banditti or insurgents, for these were synonymous words in the heyday of their triumph, kept my father in continual anxiety, which, however, he thought prudent to dissemble. I remember the locanda of Itri, and its bare, smoky walls, desolate hearth, and worm-eaten table and chairs. At last the carriage was got ready, *come Dio volle*, and we started again down the hill in perpetual fear of breaking down. We passed the custom-house of Fondi, where we saw for the first time on the road something resembling regular soldiers; and late in the evening reached Terracina, glad to have escaped from a land of cut-throats, and reached the comparatively pacific dominions of the Holy See. There was then no talk of banditti in the Roman States; they had all gone over the border to help their brethren of Naples."

The restoration of Ferdinand, which had been thus curiously effected, did not last long. In 1806 the French again took the road to Naples, and the Bourbon and his Court again fled to Sicily. The Government now established, so far from being a Republic, as on the former occasion, was a Monarchy more absolute than that of old Ferdinand; for the French had submitted to the military despotism of Bonaparte, and Napoleon had willed that

his brother Joseph should be King of Naples. The usurped monarchy, however, prospered better than the Republic; it was better suited to the Neapolitans; it was sustained by an excellent French army, and by the *now* continental supremacy of Napoleon. The mass of the nation was, however, disaffected; many men of different classes of society, from the Marchese Palmieri to the apothecary who blew up the house of the French minister of police, the execrable Saliceti; from the dismissed employés of the late Government to the poor fanatics of Bourbonism and Santa-Fede-ism the *lazzaroni*, remained in the capital disposed to plot, and ever ready to communicate with their friends in Sicily, and the emissaries the restless Queen Caroline was continually dispatching to them. Calabria was as loyal and as lawless as ever. King Ferdinand proposed to Cardinal Ruffo that he should throw himself a second time in those provinces, and repeat the experiment of counter-revolution, in which, six years before, he had been so successful. But the Cardinal had seen the horrors of civil war; the difficulty, the impossibility of restraining within proper limits the violent passions he had so well known how to excite: he excused himself to

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his Majesty, saying, "That this was a game only to be played once in the course of one's life!" All entreaties were vain; the Cardinal would not a second time face the earthly pandemonium. The Queen, however, and her partisans tried to do, what he had done, without him. But the country was occupied by formidable forces whom the Calabrians had not the discipline or other military means to meet in the field; the great towns and the wealthy proprietors pretty generally adhered, some out of affection, but more through fear, to the new system; a middling class was indifferent as to whether King Ferdinand or King Joseph pocketed the taxes they were obliged to pay; and few indeed remained to treat with, when some months had passed, save the populace who hated the French, and the bandits who had gained such laurels under Cardinal Ruffo. But with these the Queen did treat, and that incessantly, sending them commissions and uniforms, and occasionally arms and small supplies of money. These robbers corresponded with others in the different mountainous districts of the Principato, Basilicata, and the Abruzzi. Of the latter, some were driven by the French from their haunts, and obliged to fly across the moun-

tains and wilds of Calabria, where they joined their correspondents, and some were suppressed, sent to the galleys, or executed.

The last fate befel no one so notorious as Fra Diavolo, whose name and fame, as I have mentioned, are still fresh and vigorous among the Neapolitans. This man, after long setting both civil and military authorities at defiance; after having long impressed the people with a notion that he was endowed with ubiquity, for he seemed to be here and there and everywhere, almost at the same moment; after several bold rencounters, and hair-breadth 'scapes innumerable, was at length foully betrayed by some of his own friends and accomplices, and marched off in the midst of a troop of French gens-d'armes to Naples. Neither the harsh treatment, the terrible fatigue he was made to undergo on his march by the soldiers, who were all mounted, nor the prospect of certain death, could break this man's spirit. He taunted them with the recollection of the numerous occasions on which he had fooled them, and told them they never would have caught him but by treachery.

As he approached the capital thousands flocked out to see him. Loaded with chains, worn down with fatigue as he was, many turned pale and trem-



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bled at the sight of Fra Diavolo. The luxurious King Joseph, who was taking his pleasure at Portici, was also curious to see the man who, for many months, had filled his kingdom with his renown, and very unfeelingly, as it seems to me, ordered that he should be brought out to him. Fra Diavolo had walked many miles in his road to death, but without any of that regard we are accustomed to pay to criminals in such circumstances, he was at once made to turn back on the road to Portici. When he arrived there, he was promenaded under a balcony of the Royal palace, whence Joseph satisfied his curiosity, and then ordered him to prison and execution.

But where one robber fell into the hands of the French, fifty Frenchmen fell by the knife or the ambushed shot of the banditti. The army of occupation could maintain themselves in the large towns, and traverse certain open parts of the Calabrias, but only as an army—a small detachment was almost sure to be destroyed. A staff officer of the French army informed me that on one occasion, being tired of moving along with the infantry and artillery, and seeing a free country, as he thought, between him and the town to which he was going, he set off alone at a canter. He had

not gone half a mile, when a bullet whizzed past his head. His canter was converted into a hard gallop; but though he had only about *three* miles now to perform, as many shots were fired at him in the interval, without his ever being able to see from whom they proceeded.

To the desperate men whom the Queen had not hesitated to employ as the asserters of her Royal cause, and justice, and legitimacy, were soon added hosts of others whom the oppression and insolence of the French, or the hope of another speedy and successful counter-revolution, induced to take up arms and throw themselves *en campagne*. The French called them all by one name, whether political partisans or professional robbers; all were brigands, and treated in the same summary manner when caught. It is true, that at length the two classes were almost confounded in one, and that unfortunate politicians had no resources left them save those of brigandage; but many a fiery Calabrian merited not the name at the commencement of the struggle, and at no time indeed must the wholesale executions of the French be taken *au pied de la lettre* as including only banditti. On their side the Calabrians were accustomed to hold

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the French as robbers, and not entirely without reason.

“ *I ladri siete voi,*” said a Calabrian prisoner to the military tribunal of Monte Leone. “The robbers are yourselves! What business have you here, and with us? I carried my rifle and my knife for King Ferdinand, whom may God restore! but *I am no robber!*”

The English, who now preserved Sicily from the grasp of the French, meditated a descent on the coast of Calabria. This intelligence was conveyed to the bands in that country, whose confidence and daring it immensely augmented; and when, in an astonishingly short time after, General Stuart landed and gained the brilliant victory of Maida, the Calabrians looked to nothing less than the expulsion of the French from the whole Kingdom. Many who had remained quiet, declared themselves at this period; and a very available guerilla warfare, to be carried on by thousands of hardy Calabrians, might have acted in concert with a strong invading army from Sicily.\* But owing to the circum-

\* “A general insurrection broke out after our loss of the battle of Saint Euphemia. It was then that formidable tribunal which here exercises so dreadful a control, the military com-

stances of the times, the victory of Maida was rather brilliant than useful; the English had not force sufficient to follow it up, and after humbling the overweening vanity of the French, they returned to Sicily. The troops of Napoleon, column after column, now poured into Calabria, where the fate of the Bourbonists and the banditti seemed to be decided. But there were mountains and secret dells, forests and impenetrable morasses, to offer a retreat to desperation, while the outlaws had in themselves the resources of local knowledge, activity, and of a cunning altogether wonderful; and

mission, (or martial law,) was established." Letters on the Calabrias, by a French Officer, Letter VII.—It is to be remarked that the French, who never mention the victory without mortification and misstatement of facts, call the battle of Maida the battle of Saint Euphemia. "When Marshal Massena reinforced General Regnier, and the insurrection was put down, numerous arrests were made, and the military commissions condemned to death the chiefs of the insurrection, (*which, speaking as Englishmen, we should say, was only a lawful and a laudable attempt to drive out a foreign, and a most oppressive and insulting foe.*) Every place in which any resistance was offered *was pillaged and burned by the French troops*; the most rigorous military despotism was established in all quarters." Idem.—And yet, after this, the French officer seems surprised at the Calabrians' pillaging and massacring every Frenchman, and every partisan of the French, that fell in their way!

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many thousands of the foreign troops had to leave their bones to bleach in the Calabrias before the satellite-sovereignty of Napoleon could make a dubious boast of subjugation. Indeed more men fell in what they called "*ces guerres de brigands*," than in campaigns with which the French decided the destinies of whole kingdoms. We may sigh for the fate of many a brave and amiable victim, for many a youthful conscript dragged from his home, perhaps in a country foreign to France, to die in Calabria by the bandit's knife; but these men made part of a system for which we can have little sympathy as a whole. At the same time the evils that befell the peaceful population were heart-rending. Now the French shot them as being suspected of leaguings with the outlaws, and now the outlaws slaughtered them under a doubt that they informed against them to the French; whilst in many instances, the mere fact of their having admitted the foreigners, too strong to be resisted, into their houses, and given them those refreshments they durst not withhold, was enough to consign them to the destruction of vengeance.

When travelling through the country ten years after the melancholy events, I was shown a deserted farm-house in the plain of Sant' Eufemia. It

stood in an isolated spot. "You see that masseria?" said my guide; "it was occupied in the time of the French by an honest and industrious *colono*, who had a wife, five children, and his old mother living with him. He had had some dealings with the French commandant of the town, and this excited the rage of the brigands who were swarming in the neighbourhood. One night these villains broke into the house; the cries and shrieks of its inmates were so dreadful, that they were heard by the French sentries as far off as the town. A strong guard marched thence, and when they reached the masseria, they found the *colono*, his wife, his old mother, and little children, not only dead, but hacked to pieces. There were no traces of the brigands, but it was well known, and *why*, they had done it. They had carried off all the wine and provisions from the house, as well as a mare from the stable."

I believe the Calabrians are not afraid of ghosts, yet the scene of these atrocities had never since been inhabited. One half of the door and portions of the window shutters still remained; the former, as we passed, was flapping to and fro with the breeze of a windy evening.

In another part of the country my guide showed

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me a "roofless cot decayed and rent," and blackened with smoke. To this, according to his authority, some French soldiers had tracked a brigand, or one whom they considered as such; it was his paternal home, where his father, mother, and a brother lived, and who, instead of turning him out to the soldiers, or to certain death, closed their door, and prepared to defend him as best they could. Without any consideration for the innocence of the rest of the family, some of the soldiers crept to the back of the dwelling and set fire to it. But even when they felt the flames gaining upon them, the Calabrians would not give themselves or their relative up to the tender mercies of the troops—they stayed where they were, and were all burned to death.

The cruelties exercised on both sides sharpened their mutual hatred and revenge, until they waged war on each other with infinitely more than the ferocity of wild beasts.

The relations of the horrors I heard when travelling through the country, did more than confirm the accounts which have been given by Mr. Elmhirst, an officer of the British navy, who was an eye-witness of much that he describes.\*

\* Occurrences during a six months' residence in the province

“ In the centre of the town of Monteleone,” says that gentleman, “ there is a prison set apart for brigands of the most daring and unequivocal description ; and at this time it is full of these unfortunate men. Fresh captives are continually brought in ; but the daily executions prevent the place from being too much crowded. They seldom experience the least mercy, but are condemned with merely the shadow of a trial : it is, in reality, martial law by which these men are sentenced ; and the executions are conducted solely by the military. At the distance of a mile east of the town is a gallows, which is never without two or more suspended from it. It is usual to execute them early in the morning, and they are left on the gallows, *in terrorem*, until the following morning, when they are taken down, and thrown, with the whole of their clothes on, into a large pit, dug near the spot : their place is then supplied by others.”

Mr. Elmhirst goes on to relate, that from the frequency of these executions, men’s minds seemed to become horribly familiarized to them, and that very rarely a few idle spectators were collected on such occasions. The brigands, almost to a man,

of Calabria Ulteriore, in the years 1809, 1810, &c. by Lieutenant P. J. Elmhirst, R. N.



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died courageously, some of them being known to embrace the gallows, as their sole deliverance from insolence and oppression. Without preparation, with no friend to soothe them, with no priest allowed to assist and console them in their last moments, they were generally dragged with unfeeling, indecent hurry, to the Golgotha, amidst the reproaches and insults of the soldiery. They were hung up, without having their shoes or hats taken off, or any covering over their faces, and as they were turned off, they were fired at by their merciless executioners, not to lessen their sufferings, but from mere spite or wantonness. "For none of those I saw," says Mr. Elmhirst, "were shot in a vital part, but had musket-shots through their legs, &c. which would rather protract than diminish their torture." He had the curiosity and nerve to examine the large pit near the spot, into which, day after day, the remains of the brigands were thrown, as though they had been very dogs. "This vault was very deep and spacious, yet was it almost full of these hapless victims. On lifting up the cover from its mouth, the spectacle that presented itself, was horrible beyond description; and the stench and heat almost insupportable. A promiscuous heap of human bodies, in different positions,

some having their feet upwards, others their legs and arms extended, &c. The adjoining ground, also, was full of graves, which being of a very inconsiderable depth, the bodies had occasionally been disinterred by dogs and other animals, and the surrounding fields were overspread with human bones, and the fragments of garments. For the first two or three years, all the brigands that were taken in the province, were brought to Monteleone, and shot in a valley, near the springs which supply the town with water ; in consequence of which, the inhabitants abstained, for a long time, from using it, and went to a rivulet at a considerable distance. They complained of the inconvenience, and as the French themselves participated in it, and were likewise desirous that the fate of their victims should be more ignominious, they erected the gallows, and the bones at the former place of execution were collected and burned."

There was a second prison in Monteleone, where six British seamen, who had been taken prisoners with Mr. Elmhirst, were confined for some time. That gentleman, who visited it every day, on account of the poor sailors, describes it as being the most filthy and horrible of gaols ; yet, here the French had confined, with women and children of

the peasantry, who had been suspected of favouring and carrying supplies to the brigands, many individuals of respectable situations in society, who were too much attached to their allegiance, to serve the oppressors of their country.

Our countrymen who had been shipwrecked, and had thrown themselves on the coast of Calabria, in a country occupied by the enemy of Great Britain, only to escape death, were well nigh owing their release, during the first days of their captivity, to the outlaws. They were detained in the little seaport of Bianco, when the appearance of four Sicilian gun-boats threw the whole neighbourhood into alarm, for it was understood that they came from Queen Caroline, with provisions and ammunition for the bands, outlawed by the French, that existed in great force in the difficult and lofty mountains, a little to the north of Bianco, which place had lately suffered severely from an attack. It was now expected that the Sicilian boats, which had each twenty or thirty soldiers on board, would land their men under cover of their guns, and that by signals, the mountaineers would descend and form a junction with them on their landing; in which case Bianco could have offered no available resistance. "In this emergency," says Mr. Elmhirst,

“ we were far from being a desirable charge : as the inhabitants knew the brigands were acquainted with our being in confinement, as well as with the circumstances of our detention, which would be an additional incitement to them to make the attack, for, could they effect our rescue, the achievement would not only be creditable, but advantageous to them. An incident occurred on the following day which convinced me they had projected the attempt. At ten in the forenoon, a man of respectable appearance rode up in a great hurry to our residence ; and, unmindful of our being in quarantine, passed the sentinels, (who were Neapolitans,) came within the prescribed bounds, dismounted immediately, and addressing himself to me, asked several questions about the number of our guards, &c. The arrival of the Intendant of Bianco, who owned the vineyard where we were confined, and whose house stood on the opposite hill, about three quarters of a mile off, put an end to his inquiries. The Intendant presently dismissed our visitor, and informed us that he was one who lived in the neighbourhood of the brigands, had two brothers attached to them, one of whom was in Sicily, the other in the mountains, and was himself of doubtful character. The extraordinary

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conduct and appearance of this man fully convinced me that he was an emissary of the mountaineers, sent with the view of ascertaining our situation, and to devise the best plan of liberating us, and conducting us to their retreat. In the evening our guard was doubled; in the night patrols were continually going their rounds, and the sentinels were on the alert, and evidently in great alarm. One of them, a youth, told me, that he was in principle a brigand, or royalist, (for the terms were now synonymous,) and would readily embrace the first opportunity that presented itself of declaring for his original and rightful Sovereign."

The very next morning, notwithstanding that the term of their quarantine had not expired, Mr. Elmhirst and the six English seamen were suddenly hurried off, under a numerous escort, to the large town of Girace. On their way they saw a good proof of the intelligence that existed between the men on the mountains and those from Sicily. A number of the brigands were assembled near a house on the declivity of the hills, and one of the gun-boats was lying-to, on the coast, just opposite to them. The brigands, they were told, were very numerous in the vicinity of the road. "No place,

however near a town, was safe from them ; as they concealed themselves among the rocks and bushes by day, and from those retreats sprang unawares on the heedless and defenceless passenger ; so that it was usual for a person, even if he had to go but half a mile from his residence, to be well armed, and have one or two armed companions. The Capuchins alone escaped their violence.”

From Girace, our honest tars were soon marched through this land of brigandism, across the rugged Apennines to Casal Nuovo. At this town, Mr. Elmhirst saw evidences of the French oppression, which so directly tended to swell the number of the disaffected, and the bands of outlaws. The contributions, civil and military, were levied with the utmost rigour—with the bayonet at the breasts of those who had to pay them. A French officer unblushingly showed him a silver crosier, which he had seized at Girace, from a priest, as an equivalent for some arrears he was unable to obtain. The clergy, from their comparative affluence, their known dislike to the present order of things, and, perhaps, more still from the philosophic intolerance of these conquerors of the new school, were most frequently subjected to extortion. The churches themselves were not spared. “ These were mostly

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stripped of their plate, ornaments, and every thing else of value ; and the only consolation left to the priests for their real losses, was a few relics, and frivolous pictures, which their worthlessness, not the veneration of the French for such things, had preserved."

The effect of these proceedings alone, on a people so attached to their priests and their churches, and church finery, as the Calabrians, may easily be conceived.

The French soldiery, moreover, made very free with the women, and no people in the world are more sensitive and jealous than the poor Calabrians on this head. The same licentiousness on the part of the French, and the same feelings on that of the islanders, who very much resemble the Calabrians, had, centuries before, led to the memorable Sicilian Vespers ; and though there was now no such successful massacre *en masse*, many a Frenchman paid with his life for those excesses and irregularities, which, of all things, were most insupportable to the Calabrians.

But there was yet another curse at work, to alienate their minds, and drive them to madness. This was the Conscription, or forced impressment for soldiers, which the French introduced wherever

they established themselves. Many young men, who were not desperate enough to turn brigands, passed themselves off as priests, or as candidates for the priesthood. For as none of the laity, capable of bearing arms, whatever might be their rank or condition, were exempted from those arbitrary visitations, this was the only expedient left.\*

“Under the mask of resignation,” says Mr. Elmhirst, “the Calabrians, with spirits naturally haugh-

\* Nothing could well exceed the rigour of the French in levying the conscripts. “Numbers of these,” says Mr. Elmhirst, “are now assembled at Monteleone, to be sent to Naples, and thence to Buonaparte’s seat of war. Most of them have barely attained the age requiring them to serve, as the country has been for a length of time annually exhausted of all that were capable of bearing arms; those excepted who could avail themselves of the expedient of priesthood. They are in appearance real objects of commiseration. Torn from their families and their peaceful occupations, by an arbitrary edict, without either inclination or aptitude for the military profession, they consider themselves devoted to destruction, and despondency and dismay are strongly depicted on every countenance. \* \* \* \* They left the city chained together in companies of fifty, and conducted by a very strong escort of *gens-d’armes*. The road to Naples passing through a country infested by numerous parties of brigands, who continually scour it, they undergo this degradation, fit only for convicts, (whom, indeed, they literally resemble,) to prevent escape or rescue.”



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ty, dark, and vindictive, cherished the most inveterate hatred, and meditated the most violent designs ; looking forward with a malignant pleasure to the moment which would afford them an opportunity of gratifying their resentment and revenge."

From Casal Nuovo, the English prisoners were marched still farther up the country, towards Monteleone.

On their way they stopped at Lorian, which town, a few weeks before their arrival, had been attacked and pillaged in the night, by the brigands ; of whom there were parties in the adjacent mountains, consisting of from fifty to three hundred, all well armed, and some of them, who were probably under the guidance of partisans from Sicily, even disciplined and provided with field-pieces. The baronial palace did not escape plunder. The robbers, however, committed no acts of cruelty on the inhabitants, some of whom, indeed, were more than suspected of being spies of the banditti, and of having given them notice of the most favourable opportunity for making the incursion.

I have mentioned the importance of a pig-tail at Naples, a few years before. It appears, the Calabrians still retained the same predilection.

" I had scarcely entered my quarters at Lori-

ana," says Mr. Elmhirst, " when a countryman came in, who, seeing that my hair was cut close, observed in an angry manner to those present, " that I had the appearance of a Frenchman, and, had he met me alone, he should have treated me as one." The Senza-Capelli, (without hair,) or Croppies, as they were termed, were considered by the brigands to be revolutionists, or partisans of the French, and they exercised on them the greatest and most unheard-of barbarities. They frequently scalped, or otherwise maimed them. Sometimes they cut off their ears and fingers, which the unfortunate sufferers were compelled to eat ; and on the heads of many who were without queues, they sewed the tails of sheep, by way of furnishing them with such appendages, and in that condition dismissed them. So that every one who regarded his personal safety, took care to preserve an exuberance of hair ; the more of it he had, or the longer queue, so much the more he was esteemed loyal, or an enemy to the French, and thereby escaped outrage."

In the neighbourhood of Monteleone, owing to the more accessible nature of the mountains there, the ravages of the brigands were considerably restrained. But this was, perhaps, still more owing to the circumstance that one of the chiefs of the

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banditti had deserted them, and was employed by the French, who had promoted him to the rank of captain, and appointed him, with a company of soldiers, to act against his former followers and comrades. The name of this renegado, who soon afterwards came to a violent end at the hands of those he had betrayed, was Andrea Orlando. He was, what several of the bandits were not, a man of the meanest extraction, but bold, artful, and enterprising. Acquainted with all their secret retreats and habits, he without compunction hunted his former associates through the mountains with the most lamentable success. "All that could not be taken prisoners were shot, and in that event their heads were cut off and brought into the town, fixed on forked sticks, where they were exhibited in the most frequented parts, the bloody trophies of barbarity and perfidy."

As Mr. Elmhirst was one morning at the prison where the English seamen were detained, "an elderly man, who supported a numerous family on the profits of a little shop and wine-house, and who was remarkable for his industry and honesty, was brought in a prisoner and half dead. He had been to a village at the foot of the mountains to purchase wine, and was returning home with two small casks

on an ass, when he was met soon after day-light by a party of Andrea Orlando's men, who, suspecting him to be connected with the brigands, immediately conveyed him to the gallows, and were preparing to hang him, when he was fortunately recognized by a person who happened to be present, and reluctantly spared from death. After a day's imprisonment he was examined and liberated. This trifling circumstance proves the wretched state of this country. It was by a mere accident this innocent man was rescued from death ; and, without doubt, many suffered in that manner who were equally guiltless."

We must follow this interesting authority yet a little farther, as Mr. Elmhirst saw more of the state of brigandage in Calabria, when at its height, than any other Englishman whose travels I am acquainted with.

This officer, after several months' captivity, was liberated, and took his route through Calabria from Monteleone, to reach the English head-quarters at Messina. He again travelled with a strong escort. Just before he left Monteleone, " A brigand chief, famed for his courage and dreaded for his cruelty, but extremely beloved by his band, was made prisoner at no great distance from Maida,

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and conducted to a neighbouring castle. His followers were determined to effect his deliverance or revenge his death; and a short time after, they boldly attacked a village, at which a French Colonel and his family, attended by a small escort, had taken up their quarters for the night. With a trifling loss the robbers succeeded in carrying off the whole to their retreats in the mountains; and immediately sent notice of the affair to the Commander-in-Chief, accompanied with a declaration, that if any violence were offered to their captive leader, they should instantly retaliate it on the Colonel and the soldiers. In consequence of which an exchange was effected, as creditable and advantageous to the brigands, as it was mortifying to the French, who had long wished for the destruction of their prisoner."

On his journey, at Seminari, Mr. Elmhirst found that the town and neighbourhood, though protected by several companies of soldiers, were kept in a continual state of alarm by two parties of brigands. They were commanded by Ronca and Oezzarro, two chiefs celebrated for their talents, courage, and daring enterprize. The former was said to be supported by Queen Caroline, from whom he received supplies of ammunition and clothing; and he fre-

quently passed over to Messina, in spite of the vigilance of the French, who had offered a large reward for his head. A little farther on, at the pass of Salano, a young Frenchman (a son-in-law of General Partheneau) in command there informed Mr. Elmhirst, that a few days before he received a formal message from this same chief Ronca, threatening him with an attack on the village—that robber's native place. The French had good stone barracks ; they kept to their arms all night and reposed by day, and Ronca had not yet kept his threat or his promise. Ronca's breaking his word was, however, not so bad, as the manner in which his message was sent to the officer. His band met a poor peasant on the mountains, and having cut him in several places with a knife, and tied his hands behind him, they made him the bearer of Ronca's letter. The poor fellow had arrived at the French post covered with blood.

Mr. Elmhirst was not to be freed from the horrors of brigandism and atrocious warfare as long as he remained in that country ; for at the village of Campo, at the very extremity of Calabria, within three miles of the Straits of Messina, and only seven miles from Sicily, whither he was going, he saw a French lieutenant return with the

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bleeding head of a robber-chief, called "Il Rosso," from the redness of his hair—a man of audacious courage and enterprize, who had long defied all the efforts of the French Government to destroy or take him. But at last he was betrayed by some of the peasantry who occupied some lone houses at the foot of the mountains where the robber used occasionally to resort. It was in one of these houses he was surprised by night. The soldiers who surrounded it, summoned him to surrender. Il Rosso knew too well what would be his fate, and resolved, though he might not be able to effect his escape, to sell his life dearly. From the window of the lone house he shot one of the soldiers dead, he then rushed out, wounded two others, and had some prospect of distancing the Frenchmen by his speed in running, when a bullet from the musket of a serjeant of the party overtook him, and brought him to the ground. He was not, however, dead. When the soldiers came up, he begged they would put him out of his misery. They did so with their bayonets, and then cut off his head, which they carried to quarters as a trophy.

## FRANCATRIPA.

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FROM the details, concerning the Calabrian banditti, of our countryman, who was only accidentally a passive eye-witness, or brought near the scenes of their exploits, I must beg the reader's attention to details still more interesting, to adventures wilder and more extensive, which I have gathered from a French source—*i. e.* from "*Lettres sur les Calabres, par un Officier Français.*"\* The author of this valuable little volume was no less than three years in the country he describes. He had not been there three days, before he found the whole of a French soldier's business there to be a chase after robbers ; and, indeed, with a few short intervals of repose, the whole of the three years was spent in hunting brigands.

The first brigand-chief he came in contact with near Rogliano, about five leagues from Cosenza,

\* This excellent work has been lately published in London, under the title of "*Calabria during a Military Residence of Three Years.*"



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was Francatripa—a man eminent in his way and the terror of the whole country. When closely pressed, this robber was accustomed to retire for awhile to a great distance from the scene of his murderous depredations; but as soon as pursuit was over, he suddenly re-appeared and again carried desolation through the province. By placing himself upon the heights that commanded the usual lines of communication, he constantly harassed the French couriers, in order to get possession of their despatches, which he sent off to Sicily. His presence kept the troops in a state of perpetual exertion, the more painful, because it was generally attended with no advantageous results.

A company of French voltigeurs, of the twenty-ninth regiment of the line, had to cross the high mountains of the Sylva to proceed from Catanzaro to Cosenza. This company lost its way, and in an evil spot, for it was near the village called Gli Parenti, a favourite haunt of the brigands, who shared their plunder with its inhabitants; and Francatripa himself was there. Fearing to engage the French openly, the atrocious mountaineer had recourse to an odious stratagem. Meeting the company before it entered the village, he represented himself as the commander of the Militia, and

said he came on the part of the commune or village to offer refreshments to the troops. The officers, ignorant of the country, accepted the invitation without distrust, and suffered themselves to be conducted by him to a large mansion, where, confiding in the feigned cordiality of their perfidious hosts, they were improvident enough to cause the arms of the troops to be piled on the ground, in front of the door. To inspire the soldiers with a still greater sense of security, Francatripa and his villainous associates pressed them to take with them refreshments for the march ; and just at the moment they were preparing to resign themselves to repose, a pistol-shot fired from a window was the signal for a general massacre. The three officers, seated together in the saloon, were instantly despatched. A shower of balls from the adjacent houses, and from every approach to the spot, left no point of retreat open to those unfortunate soldiers, of whom not more than seven succeeded in making their escape.

The French, never backward in avenging atrocity with atrocity, immediately sent off a strong detachment, with orders to burn the village of Gli Parenti to the ground, and to put every soul found within it to the sword. They found, however, nothing

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but empty houses, which became a prey to the flames, the reflexion of which, far spreading across the mountains where its inhabitants had taken refuge, suggested new feelings of maddening hate and revenge on the part of the Calabrians.

Not long after, the author of the Letters was informed that the scouts of Francatripa had made their appearance in the neighbourhood of his quarters at Rogliano, and, at night, that the captain himself and all his *commitiva*, or band, had lodged themselves among the ruins of their native village, Gli Parenti.

“ The French commandant instantly determined to take the brigands by surprise, and we set off, about eight o'clock at night, with a detachment of a hundred and twenty men, and two confidential guides. Gli Parenti, situated four leagues from Rogliano, is separated from the latter place by a deep ravine, through which flows a torrent that is always much swollen at this season of the year. (It was on the 28th December.) To avoid passing near the village, where information of our approach might be given, it was necessary to take a great round, and occupy a certain part of a forest, through which the brigands might probably endeavour to escape. This movement was seconded by

a company of the battalion, which had received orders to take up a position by six o'clock in the morning within a short distance of Gli Parenti, and guard all the outlets on that side. The dawn of day was the moment fixed upon for making a sudden and unexpected attack, from which a successful result was confidently anticipated. A cold, but very bright night favoured the march of the detachment, which followed a beaten track in the middle of a wood, but on quitting it, to approach the ravine, we experienced considerable difficulty in passing through some very thick underwood, where every object was immersed in darkness. The greatest obstacles still awaited us in descending a mountain, from which our course was to be tracked over a region covered with snow to the depth of several feet. This dangerous descent, however, and the crossing of the torrent, were effected without any accident; and at five o'clock in the morning we arrived at our post, pierced with cold, and waiting in silence the moment when we were to advance upon the village. Before daylight we came to a hill, at the foot of which Gli Parenti is situated. Some musket-shots fired from the opposite side led us to imagine that the attack was commenced in that quarter. Ac-

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cordingly we marched in quick-time, and with the more ardour, as we hoped to surprise the notorious bandit, and destroy his horde. But by one of those fatalities which generally mar all our expeditions of the kind—whether it was that Francatripa was forewarned of our approach, or did not think himself sufficiently secure in this haunt, it is certain he had made his escape by three in the morning, thus baffling all our projects. The soldiers, who had hoped to get possession of a rich booty, comforted themselves with the discovery of a cave containing an abundance of provisions and excellent wine. The shots which had seemed to announce the presence of Francatripa were fired at some peasants whom our soldiers took for brigands. One of these peasants, or brigands, (terms which in this country are nearly synonymous,) being wounded in the leg, and fearing our men intended to put him to death, discovered the magazine of provisions, on condition of his life being spared.”

The village of Gli Parenti, surrounded by lofty mountains and furious torrents, and commanded by the ruins of an old castle, presents to the eye one of those savage situations which fill the soul with that secret horror the gloomy pictures of Mrs. Radcliffe can so well inspire.

## BENINCASA AND OTHERS.

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A FEW weeks after this nocturnal expedition, the author of the Letters and the corps to which he belonged, marched to Nicastro, near the bay and the forest of Saint Euphemia. The latter had for ages been the resort of banditti. The French officer found it frequented by a robber more daring and formidable even than Francatripa, who had led him such a dance to Gli Parenti.

“Never am I destined,” says he, “to have done with that eternal plague of Calabria—brigandage. The forest of Saint Euphemia is generally known as the haunt of one of the most active of the bandit chiefs. This forest, extremely thick, and with a swampy soil, is a mysterious labyrinth, of which none but the brigands possess the clue. So complex and intricate are its numberless avenues, and so obstructed with underwood, which is absolutely impenetrable when defended by an armed force, that our troops have never been able to open a way through the forest. An old villain, named Benin-

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casa, the most noted of all the Calabrian brigands, is the great leader of all the hordes that infest this dangerous quarter. He was loaded with murder and crime long before the arrival of the French in the country, and only escaped justice by flying to the woods and rallying round him a numerous and desperate band of assassins. Last autumn an attempt was made to destroy this frightful haunt; and to ensure success, it was determined to treat with Benincasa, and offer him and his associates very advantageous terms; but the business has proceeded so slowly, and with so little address, that nothing effectual has yet been accomplished; while these brigands, fearing to be routed from their den, have again taken to the open country, after having committed all sorts of atrocities."

About a month after our author's arrival at Nicastro, the garrison of that town was so weakened by being obliged to send out large detachments with every courier, and with every person employed in levying the contributions, (for, reversing the old adage on the Swiss, *point de soldats, point d'argent*) that only about fifty men, including invalids, remained behind. The commandant had the forethought to get the officers together in a strong stone chapel, attached to a church,

that served as a barrack for the soldiers. It was well for them he did so, for about the midnight-hour the tranquillity of Nicastro was disturbed by the discharge of fire-arms and hideous yells.

“ All the brigands of the neighbourhood were approaching the prison in a body, in the hope of releasing their relations, who were detained there as hostages; but the guard received them with a murderous fire, which soon slackened their ardour. As it was to be expected they would make a similar attack upon the barrack, the Commandant proposed that we should anticipate them, by rushing out to give them battle. Accordingly, we sallied out, to the number of seventeen, armed from top to toe. The darkness and confusion suffering us to approach without being perceived, we discharged a volley at a vast assemblage of persons, who, in an instant, betook themselves to flight, panic-struck, and leaving many dead or wounded on the spot. The inhabitants of Nicastro, by their culpable inactivity, seemed to favour the surprise. After this affair shall have been reported to our general-in-chief, they must expect to be treated with the greatest rigour; but, if our safety depends on making them in some degree responsible, we must still in fairness admit, that the situation of



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the landed proprietors of this country is most deplorable. Independently of the hatreds and feuds so common among the Calabrians, they employ against each other the most odious means of vengeance, making the brigands their sanguinary agents. Benincasa, the natural protector of all the enemies of the French, and the formidable destroyer of the property of all those who seem to favour them, has established an arbitrary sway over the political opinions and conduct of private individuals. Like a ferocious beast of prey, he darts forth from his lair at night, and the day never fails to discover some new act of savage treachery—some new disaster ! The landholders are obliged to conduct themselves with the greatest address towards the brigands, and silently to submit to their exactions of provisions and money. On the other hand, this conduct necessarily subjects them to a rigid surveillance, by the French commanding-officers, who, on suspicion of their being the authors or abettors of brigandage, very frequently cast them into prison.”

Communication by means of post had become most uncertain. The author of the Letters, and his comrades at Nicastro, had long been expecting the arrival of a courier from Naples. At last he

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arrived safe and sound ; but he did not so reach Monteleone, the next military station, for which he departed forthwith. The escort consisted of thirteen voltigeurs and a serjeant who commanded them. Three of the men marched a-head, who, while they were reconnoitring the entrance of a ravine, were fired upon and brought to the ground before they could give the alarm. The next moment the detachment saw itself surrounded on every side ; and the next, the courier, the serjeant, and eight voltigeurs were killed. Five men escaped, and breathless carried the news of the massacre back to Nicastro. The Commandant sent the author of the Letters in pursuit ; he had the mortification of finding his unfortunate countrymen weltering in their blood, without any signs of life ; their post-bags stripped of their contents, and an immense number of letters, torn to pieces and stained with blood, scattered about on the ground ; but he was obliged to return to Nicastro without the satisfaction of so much as seeing a single Calabrian.

After relating this catastrophe, he informs his correspondent that brigandage is indeed carried to its utmost pitch of horror ; that he cannot take a walk in the suburbs of the town, no matter how

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short the distance; that he cannot stir beyond the walls of Nicastro, some of whose inhabitants are always on the alert to inform the robbers of the slightest movements of the French, without an escort. On returning to the mountainous district about Rogliano, where he had first heard of Francatripa, he was informed that that bandit had fled from the country. The French having failed in all their expedients to rid themselves of him, succeeded at last in buying over some of the robber's band, who engaged to deliver him into their hands, dead or alive; but Francatripa had even the address and good fortune to save himself from the treachery of his own men, and no longer relying on his band, contrived to retreat to an impenetrable lurking-place in the forest of Saint Euphemia, whence he soon effected his escape to Sicily, carrying with him, it was said, a considerable amount of treasure. His place in Calabria was soon supplied. Parafante, the chief of another band, by uniting the remains of Francatripa's *commitiva* to his own, became still more formidable than that bandit had been. His nightly incursions were frequently pushed as far as the entrance of Rogliano, where the French were obliged to keep up a guard on every point. Expedition after expedition, sent against the out-

law, utterly failed. At last the Commandant thought he was sure of him! One morning a Calabrian priest, from some place in the neighbourhood, waited on this officer, and with a very mysterious air, told him he had some important disclosures to make.

The worthy ecclesiastic began by exhibiting a number of certificates from French officers, vouching for his good faith. Then coming to the point, he told the Commandant he was the sworn enemy of the brigand Parafante, who was the murderer of many members of his family; he assured him he had an understanding with several of the robber's followers, and that, of a certainty, he would cause him to fall into the hands of the French. Parafante, he added, was at that moment in the immediate neighbourhood, waiting the ransom of a thousand ducats for a rich proprietor his band had seized. The money was to be paid that very night, and the priest proposed to lay such a snare for them, that the robbers could not escape. It was agreed, then, that a detachment of a hundred men should set off that night under favour of silence and darkness, and the guidance of a man of the priest's recommending. The Commandant, in giving the necessary orders to the author of the

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Letters, who was to command the detachment, agreed that it would be imprudent to trust implicitly to an unknown priest, and that inquiries concerning him should be made. The result of these inquiries went to establish that the zealous ecclesiastic was a notorious intriguer, on whom no reliance whatever could be placed. The French officers then sounded the guide whom the priest had appointed to conduct the detachment. By threats and promises this man was induced to declare that the priest, his master, was in the pay of the brigands, and had no other object than to divert the French troops from Rogliano, in order to facilitate some profitable enterprize which Parafante sought to effect, during their absence, in that neighbourhood. The author of the Letters, with a number of soldiers, ran immediately to the house where the ecclesiastic had taken up his lodgings; but quick as they were, the priest had got the start of them—he was nowhere to be found. They then bound his unfortunate agent, the guide, with strong cords, and forced him, under the penalty of being shot, to lead them in the direction which the brigands were really to take. At one hour after midnight the detachment was placed in ambush: not a whisper on their part, not the sight

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of so much as the tip of a shakò, revealed their presence. They had not been long in this profound silence when a confused noise announced the approach of the brigands. They remained quiet and motionless until the unsuspecting band was fairly within musket-shot; then the detachment fired a full volley, and with such tremendous effect, that a great number of the robbers fell, killed or wounded. The soldiers then rushing from their place of concealment, attacked them with the bayonet, when they took to precipitous flight, uttering the most frightful cries. Their chief Parafante, however, was neither among the killed nor the wounded; he was not even among those who had sustained this murderous attack, having led another portion of his band by a different route. But the shots and cries of terror he must have heard, forced him to give up the expedition he was bent upon, and the losses they sustained had the effect of keeping the brigands in check, in that part of Calabria, for some time.

The French found plenty of money on the greater part of the dead and wounded. They set a price on the head of the priest who had attempted to deceive them, but it is not stated that they ever caught him.

## BRIGANDS OF CALABRIA.

CONTINUED.

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OUR author's next encounter with the Calabrians, whom, in this instance, from their great numbers, he styles "insurgents," was at a distant and still wilder part of the Apennines, at Longo-Bucco, a place he describes as presenting the very image of chaos, where nothing is seen but mountains rising in confused piles, and terminating in peaks ; huge, overhanging rocks, which threaten to crush and bury the wretched little villages beneath them, and torrents which roar from the bottom of deep and gloomy glens.

The French, who had marched in two columns from the town of Rossano, and by the most frightful approaches, effected a junction as the bells of all the mountain villages were beginning to sound the tocsin. They soon afterwards dispersed with their regular and formidable charge a crowd of armed peasants who had taken possession of the

plateau of a commanding mountain. At nightfall, they reached an eminence whence Longo-Bucco was visible, situated, far below them, in a narrow, deep valley, traversed in its length by a furious torrent rushing tumultuously over enormous rocks. The gigantic wooded mountains surrounding the dreadful gorge, gave to it a still more gloomy and savage character. The French passed the night upon the heights, (it was a cold night in the month of November!) establishing an extensive line of fires, in order to impress the Calabrians with the idea that they had a larger force than they really had. While they were shivering on the mountain tops, the wildest confusion prevailed in the narrow valley at their feet. Lights were seen hurrying here and there; shrieks of terror resounded on every side. The inhabitants, expecting that the French would come upon them by night, with fire and sword, were running about in the confusion of panic or madness, seeking to place their property and their persons in security. The French, however, did not descend into the dreadful abyss until daylight, when two hundred men were detached, and entered the village of Longo-Bucco, which was entirely evacuated, save by a few old men and the curate. These presented themselves to implore mercy for the village, and for its inhabitants who had fled.



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The French commandant made the curate the medium of a negotiation. The villagers were to lay down their arms and return to their homes, where the troops engaged not to molest them. By degrees the greater part did so return, and tranquillity was established for awhile at Longo-Bucco without bloodshed or plunder. The rest of this narrative, for more reasons than one, will be better given in the precise words of our author and hero.

“However,” continues he, “the two chiefs of the insurrection still held out; our Commandant, hoping to bring them to terms, wrote to them to the effect that, if they would dismiss their bands, they might meet him in perfect security. Seeing that they still persisted in revolt, he determined to proceed and attack them in a village where a numerous body of *rebels* had assembled. In execution of his plan, he set out on the evening of the 5th of November, with four hundred men, pretending that he was going towards Bochigliero; but on the approach of night, suddenly changing his route, he conducted us by a rapid and well-combined movement to the point occupied by the insurgents, who very fortunately had no intimation of our advance. The village where they had taken refuge was surrounded in silence, and as day broke we marched to its attack. The village hung like

an eagle's nest from the verge of a rock. While we were endeavouring to parley with the insurgents, who answered our words of peace with musket shot, a great tumult was heard from the interior of the village. It was occasioned by the unexpected appearance of about twenty of our soldiers, who had just entered, after having climbed over almost inaccessible rocks. In an instant the cry of 'storm!' 'storm!' was heard on all sides. We hastened on to the village, which is in a great part surrounded by a high wall, and, in spite of a very hot fire, that in a few minutes killed or wounded more than twenty of our men, the gate was broken down by our sappers, the soldiers spread through the street like an overwhelming torrent, and then commenced a horrible massacre, which was rendered inevitable by the obstinacy of the insurgents, who kept up an incessant fire from all the houses.

“ This unfortunate village, sacked and burned, experienced, indeed, all the horrors inseparable from a place taken by storm. The curate, a great number of women, children, and old men, luckily effected their escape into a church, to which a party of officers had repaired for the purpose of protecting this asylum from the brutality of the soldiers. Our

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loss in this affair has been considerable; but that of the insurgents, who are now almost destroyed, is upwards of two hundred men. A great number, hoping to save themselves by climbing up the rugged back of the mountain, perished in the attempt; but, unfortunately, the principal persons having again succeeded in effecting their escape, we were obliged to start immediately in pursuit of them, in order to prevent fresh machinations on their part; and the detachment marched upon Bochigliero, a large town, better situated, and more populous than Longo-Bucco, but which had still taken an active part in these disturbances. The news of our success had preceded us to this place. Thrown into consternation, the inhabitants hastened to send us a deputation, composed of all the leading authorities, and the most influential individuals of the country. The Commandant, wishing to avail himself of the first moment of terror to disarm this commune, threatened to send the whole deputation as hostages to the castle of Cosenza, if all the arms in the country were not delivered to him. In less than one hour, three thousand stand were given up and burned. A hundred men have remained at Bochigliero, and we have returned to Longo-Bucco. To render this painful victory complete, nothing

has been wanting but the capture of the principal leaders of the insurrection. A price is set upon their heads. Within the last two days we have been joined by a swarm of subordinate *employés*, who have come for the purpose of raising taxes in the district in every possible way. They are now running over the country guarded by detachments of soldiers, that meet no resistance."

The next adventure was much less tragical. The Commandant, the author of the Letters, and the other French officers had all become acquainted at Rossano with a little Calabrian. One might have fancied, from the trick already put upon them, that they had had enough of priests; but this second friend and confidant was an ecclesiastic—a jolly Abbot, round-paunched, animated, intelligent, and amusing. He was on such very friendly terms with them, indeed, that he accompanied them to Longo-Bucco; for it was understood he possessed a perfect knowledge of the country, and he had offered to render them every service in his power. By the management of some trifling affairs, in which he showed considerable zeal and talent, the little rogue gained the heart and the entire confidence of the Commandant, whose mind was still set on

getting the two leaders of the late movements into his hands.

“ One morning the wily monk told him, he was the man who would do this, if the Commandant would but entrust him with the charge of a detachment. He knew the obnoxious individuals to be concealed at a farm-house not many leagues from the spot, and all that he required for his own personal safety, was to be allowed to march in the French ranks disguised as a soldier.

“ The Commandant, far from suspecting any perfidy, eagerly adopted a project which presented great chances of success. Behold us then setting about transforming our little Abbot into a soldier, (the Abbot must have laughed at them in his sleeve,) laughing most heartily at this masquerade-scene. No part of the uniform belonging to the lowest-sized voltigeur could be found to fit him. The great coat trailed down to his heels, the schakos covered his ears, the cartouch-box descended to his hams, and he bent under the weight of the musket, which his delicate hands scarcely dared to touch. Every thing, however, was soon adjusted for him, and the wag, completely disguised, set off in high glee, with a detachment of

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five-and-twenty men, under the command of an officer. After leading our soldiers about from village to village, through dreary fastnesses and in dreadful weather, and after making them lie concealed for a whole day in a wood, he suddenly resumed his monk's dress, under the pretext that he was going to look out for some information, and disappeared—never to return."

It was soon ascertained that the ingenious Abbot had assumed this masquerade, and borne these military fatigues, for the sole object of levying contributions, in the Commandant's name, on all the most wealthy proprietors of the neighbourhood. Our author of the Letters is exceedingly indignant at this; and yet, perhaps, the Abbot had only been seduced by the force of French example, and had not the "rare honesty" to see their "swarms of subordinate employés" running about the country, "raising taxes *in every possible manner*," without the wish and the attempt to go and do likewise. The narrator of the very amusing story adds, "The indignation of the Commandant and the officer who went with the detachment may be easily imagined, since their *honour* might be compromised under circumstances of such vile deception. The description of the arrant knave has

Banditti and Robbers.



THE ABBOT.





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been sent about in all directions, and woe be to him if he should fall into our hands." The Abbot, of course, was no such fool. We hear no more about him from the French officer.

The Commandant, however, was determined to have the heads of the two chiefs. His troops had spent a month in scouring the country, to no purpose. They were now in all the horrors of winter, which season is indeed most horrid while it lasts among those mountains, spite of their southern latitude, and our notions of the eternal sunshine of Italy. They were continually enveloped in snow and thick mist, the rain fell in torrents, inundating the narrow valley of Longo-Bucco, and to such a degree that all communication from house to house was intercepted. In short, their stay at Longo-Bucco became more and more insupportable. To accelerate, therefore, their departure thence, the French had recourse to "fresh measures of severity," (our author does not inform us what these measures were,) and this at last goaded on the inhabitants to pursue in earnest the two obnoxious fugitives, for they found they should never get rid of the soldiers and their violence, except by giving them up. On the 6th of December, therefore, at daybreak, "the Commandant was startled by the serjeant of the

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guard, who entered his bed-room, accompanied by two men, each of whom held by the hair a head reeking with gore. Rising suddenly from his couch, he was filled with horror on beholding this hideous spectacle. The two chiefs had fallen that very night into a snare which had been artfully prepared for them, and had thus become victims to the cowardly treachery and reckless cruelty of their own partisans:" which treachery and cruelty, we would add, were forced upon them for self-preservation, by the French, who would not depart without those heads—as our author himself has declared.

The next adventure he relates has much of the picturesqueness, but none of the horror of the last. He had returned to Maida. It was nearly a year after the expedition to Longo-Bucco.

"Our companies are dispersed through the villages which surround St. Euphemia, and some that are detached at the foot of the mountains, have daily encounters with the brigands. We are not over anxious to pursue those in our immediate neighbourhood, for they never trouble us. However, we have availed ourselves of this favourable circumstance, to make a somewhat curious expedition.

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“ A few days ago, the owner of the house where I lodge, came to inform me that the brigands of the forest of St. Euphemia, had sent an emissary to treat for the ransom of several herds of cattle, which were carried off from some private individuals of the commune. He proposed that the Commandant should have this person arrested, and that he should be compelled to conduct us through the secret passages of the forest. This advice, given only with the view of getting back the cattle without paying any ransom for them, might still be turned to advantage. The brigands' messenger was arrested that very night, and brought before the Commandant. The fear of a bullet, and the formal promise that he should have part of the booty, soon made him so tractable, that he engaged to stand to be shot with his hands tied behind his back, if, when the expedition was once undertaken, he did not make it succeed. I myself directed the officers to proceed to the place appointed: the soldiers were awakened without any noise, and at eleven o'clock at night we left the precincts of Maida, making our way silently along the banks of the Amato. We crossed this river a short distance from the forest, which we entered, conducted by our guide, and favoured by a fine

clear moonlight. We had at first to open a way through a mass of thick brushwood, and then cross a swamp, the mire of which emitted a most fetid stench. Arrived at a deep ditch, the guide, guarded by some men, passed over to the other side for the purpose of seeking among the bushes for the beams and planks by means of which the brigands cross such places. This was a tedious operation. Daylight approached, and at a distance was heard the reiterated barking of a great number of dogs. Scarcely had some soldiers gained the opposite side of the ditch, and formed on a narrow bank, when musket-shots, discharged from the forest, and followed by hideous yells, plainly told us that the brigands were aware of our approach. No time was to be lost: we rushed upon this bank head foremost. A new ditch arrested our progress, and ascertaining it was only four feet deep, we crossed it rapidly, while the first rays of the sun lighted us on our urgent march through a forest of very high trees. We soon arrived at a circular spot, surrounded with underwood, and protected from the heat of the sun by thick foliage. Here we at length found ourselves in the very centre of this den of bandits. The branches of the trees were covered with hammocks; horses, mules, and asses,

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were tied by the bridle to the trees; quarters of beef and mutton were in the process of being roasted round a huge fire; sacks of bread, cheese, and bacon, lay upon the ground, together with several hogshheads of wine. In short, we found provisions of all kinds, but the brigands had fled. We beheld, as traces of their precipitate flight across the broken thickets, some hats which had been caught by the branches, and also tatters of dress. On endeavouring to track the line through the morass, where these things were found, we were assured by the guide that he had never before been further in advance, and that he did not know the secret haunts of Benincasa, the chief of this horde: we were, therefore, obliged to content ourselves with the possession of his kitchen. We did due honour to the feast that was prepared there; but perceiving that heads were getting hot, and the feet of many of the soldiers beginning to be unsteady, it was necessary to think of retiring. This was the more prudent, since the guide observed that the brigands, lurking all around, and protected by the impossibility of our penetrating into their fastnesses, might very easily let fly a shower of balls among us. Having loaded the mules and asses with the booty, we retired safe and

sound from this mysterious labyrinth, covered, it is true, with mire and mud, but still with the slight glory of being the first to explore it. It is wonderful how men can accustom themselves to live in such a place, without being consumed by pernicious fevers, and insects of every kind. The love of independence, or the fear of punishment, can alone effect this prodigy. While we were making our way into this forest, a part of the detachment that ran along the skirts of it, found a great number of oxen and sheep, the produce of robberies committed in the neighbouring plains. Those that belonged to the commune of Maida, were restored to the owners, and the remaining animals being sold by auction, brought the detachment more than three hundred piasters. The guide has been liberally rewarded, and as we are all well assured that he will never again venture to show his face in this community of bandits, we have given him his liberty."

## SCAROLLA.

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LITTLE more than a month after the adventures in the forest of St. Euphemia, Calabria was inundated by new partisans and adventurers. The author of the Letters calls them all brigands, as usual, and abuses the English in Sicily for co-operating with them. The force, however, for the greater part, did not consist of professional robbers, but of Bourbonists of Calabria and other disaffected provinces. They were commanded by a certain Scarolla, who styled himself "Chief of the Independents of Basilicata." "His dress," says the French officer, "was gorgeous, and he was followed by a great number of saddle-horses and mules, which, they said, carried considerable treasure. Here then, at length, was a chief worthy to measure swords with, and, what was still more important, a rich booty to be seized. What a stimulus for our soldiers! Though they had already marched thirty miles, they demanded to set out again after having taken a little rest, and at four o'clock

in the morning they were in full march, following the route which this horde had pursued. We could not miss the way, for numberless broken-down animals marked out the perilous paths which traverse these horrible mountains."

Having toiled on from four in the morning till nightfall, the French gained the top of a mountain covered with wood, and thought, at last, they were sure of those they pursued; for from a deep gorge through which brawled a mountain stream, they heard a confused noise, which indicated the presence of a numerous assemblage of men, who, from their position, they judged could be no others than the brigands. Circumstances favoured an attack by surprise. Two columns of fifty men each were marched to the opposite end of the gorge to fall on their rear or harass their retreat, while the rest of the French were to attack them in front. But scarcely had they begun to move to this effect, when some shots whizzed by their officer—the author of the Letters. The officer hastened his pace, and ascertained that the shots had been fired by a group of peasants who had accompanied the French, and pretended to act as guides, but who now, having given the alarm to their friends the brigands, were flying across the wild country. He



then heard a tremendous uproar rise from the dark, deep gorge, where the outlaws were making every possible exertion to secure their plunder, and betake themselves to flight.

“Not an instant was to be lost. Our troops hurried rapidly down from the mountain, and precipitated themselves into the torrent. We soon found ourselves mingled pell-mell with them in that state of disorder and confusion which is inseparable from an attack in the night-time; and the glimmering light of the shots that were fired on all sides, enabled us to see them running off at the top of their speed. The columns appointed to cut off their retreat not having arrived on the spot, and the darkness of the night preventing all pursuit, these brigands regained without further impediment, but not without considerable loss, the mountains of the Sylva. Next day, we found several brigands dead or dying, and the soldiers brought in a great number of mules and asses, but which, unfortunately, conveyed no part of the treasures of Scarolla: they were loaded, however, with his canteens, and to these we did ample justice.”

Scarolla and his horde retreated through the Calabrias, followed in vain by the French, who could not again come up with them. They

thence threw themselves across still wilder mountains, and entered without molestation the States of the Church. They had established themselves on the steep heights of Monte Polino, to rest awhile after their extraordinary fatigues, when directed merely by chance, a French moveable column, employed on altogether different business, surprised them in a profound sleep, and killed great numbers of them. The remainder were routed on all sides, and the French soldiers obtained so considerable a booty, that they were seen playing at *petits-palets* with Spanish doubloons. Scarolla did not fall then, but he was so severely wounded as to be obliged to take refuge with some shepherds, who, for a thousand ducats, gave him up to the French. He was hanged shortly after.

## CONCLUSION TO THE BRIGANDS OF CALABRIA.

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SUCH was the indomitable spirit of the Calabrians, that when King Murat was at the extremity of their peninsula with a formidable French and Neapolitan army, with which he was to beat the English and take Sicily, they again revolted, and rose in his rear. His communication with the capital was continually intercepted, and he was obliged to detach several battalions from his camp to proceed against the brigands, and keep the roads open. The author of the Letters, as one who had experience in these matters, was ordered to march back, and he turned his eyes with deep regret from that island of Sicily, of which the French made so sure, but which they were never to get! When he arrived in the district of Castrovillari, which is situated at the entrance into Calabria from the side of the capital, he found the whole country in the hands of the brigands, or insurgents. The inhabitants of the villages bordering on the mountain of Campotemese intercepted all communications,

and plundered all the money forwarded to the camp, unless it was protected by a very powerful escort. Our author's battalion set about occupying the mountain passes with intrenched posts. This service presented great difficulties in consequence of the nature of their positions, and the character of the inhabitants, which was still more wild and ferocious than in the other parts of Calabria; and, moreover, the French were not at all acquainted with this part of the peninsula. The first place they halted at was Mormano. Here all seemed quiet; but at night three soldiers having gone out from a church where they were-quartered, were at once poniarded. The Syndic, or principal magistrate, and six other leading characters were arrested, and because they could not, or would not discover the assassins, were detained as prisoners. Leaving behind a body of troops in a convent as a point of retreat in case of need, the author of the Letters and the rest of the French set forward to scour the insurgent villages. They traversed some frightful mountains and yawning gorges. The continual dread of ambuscade made their march very slow. The old, the sick, and helpless alone were found in the miserable villages through which they passed; all the rest fled at their approach. It was necessary to know where these were assembling;

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and to this end the advanced guard seized two ferocious-looking beings employed in tending flocks, real savages, whose mountain jargon it was almost impossible to comprehend. After threatening these fellows with death, the French contrived to learn from them that a gathering of several thousand men waited their approach in a defile which they must necessarily pass. The French advanced with rapidity, and by making a detour, forcing their way through almost impervious woods, they came, unexpected, on a multitude of peasants who were lying on the ground, most of them fast asleep, and all without order or preparation for defence. A volley set them to flight, killing and wounding, however, some of them. The French pursued them at the bayonet's point to a deep dell, at the extremity of which stands the village of Orsomarzo.

“It would be extremely difficult,” says the author of the Letters, whom I leave to narrate this last and most desperate of his adventures in Calabria, “to meet with any situation more sublimely terrific and extraordinary than the spot where this village lies engulfed. Surrounded on all sides by gigantic mountains, terminating in conical points, it seems, as it were, placed at the bottom of a vast well. The descent is by a steep

flight of steps, following the windings of a torrent, which rushes down with a loud roaring, and forms grand cascades. This torrent runs through the village, whence, finding vent in the narrow cleft of a rock, it fertilizes a fine well-cultivated country, which presents a most striking contrast with the horror inspired by this hideous abyss. It appears inconceivable how any human beings could ever have thought of fixing their abode in such a place. The path which follows the course of this torrent is cut through the rock; and it is impossible to engage in any conflict there with safety, unless the heights are entirely commanded at the same time. After having guarded the principal entrance of this savage retreat, by a detachment placed on the top of the only mountain on which a body of troops could be stationed, but which, unfortunately, was rather too far distant, we went down the gulf, to Orsomarzo, to look for provisions, never once imagining that the peasants, whom we had so lately routed, would venture to show themselves again, during that day. We found the village quite deserted: everything in it indicated the precipitation with which the inhabitants had fled from their homes. The doors of the greater part of the habitations were wide open, and we found in the houses provisions of every kind.

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While we were employed in collecting a stock, which should serve us for several days, we heard some shots fired, and at the same instant the surrounding mountains were occupied by a multitude of armed men. The detachment stationed at the entrance of the defile had just been attacked, and obliged to abandon its position, after having many men killed and wounded; at the moment we were advancing to its assistance, it was obliged to turn towards the village with the utmost precipitation. The peasants, who were in close pursuit, had nearly established themselves before us, so as to cut off all escape from this cut-throat abyss, where we were all now crowded together without any hope of being able to open a passage on that side. The detachment then hastened to the other outlet, where it was received with a shower of stones, and enormous pieces of rock hurled down from the top of the mountain. The latter crushed before my eyes two sappers and a drummer. Seeing that we could not encounter our murderous assailants in this passage, without the risk of utter destruction, we came to the resolution of hazarding everything else to rescue ourselves from so dreadful a situation. Balls were showered upon us on all sides, and the piercing screams of women sounded horribly in our ears—screams which appeared to

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us those of the Furies impatiently waiting the moment when they were to feast upon our blood. The drummers beat the charge, and we rushed towards this fatal spot with the energy of despair. The light company having crossed the torrent under a shower of balls, with extreme difficulty climbed up the steep side of a mountain, whence the incessant fire of the brigands caused us considerable loss; and at length these brave men succeeded in opening a passage for us, which nothing but the most desperate necessity could render practicable. The moment we gained the heights, our soldiers, absolutely furious, rushed after the Calabrians with all the impetuosity of rage. The greater part of them escaped, but a numerous group assembled on the point of a rock were massacred on the spot, or perished by flinging themselves down the precipices. This unfortunate check has cost us upwards of sixty men; and, moreover, many of us have wounds and contusions, and balls that are not yet extracted. We marched during a part of the night on our return to the Convent at Mormano, before these peasants (the most determined of any we had yet encountered in Calabria) could have time to intercept us. We entered the town to the beat of drum."

The French always make the best of their



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reverses, and never acknowledge a defeat; but here, according to the officer's own showing, they were soundly beaten; and if credit is to be given to some people of the country I have heard speak on the subject, the affair at Orsomarzo was still more serious than he has represented it. This was shown, indeed, by the effect produced. The insurrection spread, and the commander of the battalion was obliged to beg for reinforcements.

But shortly after this, Murat, returning humbled from his vain-glorious, futile attempt on Sicily, having embarked at the little port of Pizzo,\* to creep along shore towards Naples, was driven by the British cruisers under the battery of Cirella, which place, only a few days before, had been attacked and nearly taken by the Calabrians. Here he communicated with the Commandant of the station, our author's superior officer, and having

\* It was at this place that Joachim Murat was taken and shot when he made his mad attempt to regain his kingdom. Never was madness equal to his landing in Calabria, where, of all parts of the kingdom, the French were most thoroughly detested. Poor fellow! he had been the bravest of the brave; a man, too, with many kind and amiable qualities, and if he at all merited the death of a dog he met with in the filthy court-yard of the gaol of Pizzo, (where, little more than a year after the event, I stood on the spot where he fell,) it was by his having presided over the foul execution of the Duke D'Enghien.

praised the conduct of his troops, said that, after three years' hard service in such a country as Calabria, it was high time they should change quarters. He made a characteristic remark on the unfortunate business of Orsomarzo,—“Why did you go down into that cut-throat place?—However, you came up again like brave fellows!” and then, as soon as the English frigates let him, he continued his voyage along-shore. The author of the Letters and his comrades soon went after Murat, following the movement of the army which returned to Naples by land; and he expresses his natural delight to be at last released from a wretched exile, and from a species of warfare which offered neither glory nor promotion, and left nothing in the end save disastrous chances.

On turning his back on the mountains and brigands of Calabria, of which, it must be confessed, he has given us some interesting details, he informs us of the French plans for future proceedings there. “Extraordinary measures of severity are now to be resorted to—measures unfortunately rendered necessary by the deplorable situation of the country, but the execution of which will always be repugnant to Frenchmen. It has been clearly proved that, notwithstanding all our courage, activity, and perseverance, still we contend with great disad-

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vantage against men born in the country, lightly armed, supported by a part of the population, and accustomed from their infancy to shoot with a deadly aim. These considerations have induced the Government to resolve upon adopting a new system, according to which the troops are only to be employed in compelling the inhabitants to extirpate the brigands of themselves, under penalty of being regarded as their accomplices and abettors. For this purpose, ten thousand men are to be spread over the two provinces, &c."

And this new system was, indeed, soon set at work, and these extraordinary measures of severity soon deluged Calabria anew with blood. In the French General Manhes, Joachim Murat found the very man to superintend or direct these massacres *en masse*, and the Calabrians the most ruthless enemy that had ever been let loose upon them. I have heard stories in the country that would make humanity shudder—for the sake of that officer (he is still living), I hope these were untrue or immensely exaggerated. Yet it remains undisputed, and has even been admitted by those who served under him or with him, that Manhes was a cruel, pitiless man to the Calabrians, the people of the Abruzzi, &c. and acted up to a system of blood without once relenting. No mercy was ever extend-

ed to the outlaws who fell into his hands. Villages, whole towns, through which the inhabitants had allowed the brigands a passage, felt his tremendous vengeance. Any peasant, without distinction of sex or age, who was found going out to labour in the country, with more than a small flask of wine and a morsel of bread, calculated to be just sufficient to support life for one day, was taken and shot ; for Manhes, having made pretty sure of the towns and villages, whence the brigands could no longer supply themselves, thought if he could prevent the peasantry from smuggling out provisions to them, that they must either surrender themselves, or die of want in the mountain fastnesses to which he had driven them. If an honest man concealed, or corresponded with, or aided the escape of an outlaw—no matter, were it his own father, or son, or brother, he was forthwith executed. On one occasion, when a condemned brigand had escaped from the cappella, or chapel, where it is usual to place criminals the night before their execution, he shot the priest who had been with him, alleging that he must have aided the robber in his flight.

By unusual severity like this, Manhes boasted he put down brigandism in Calabria. The boast was partly made out by fact.

## THE VARDARELLI.

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THREE brothers of this very respectable name enjoyed a higher and a longer celebrity than any, even of the Calabrian banditti, and may, perhaps, be entitled to the rank of the first brigands in modern times, of Naples—*i. e.* of Europe.

Hitherto their deeds have not met with regular historians ; but the following are among the stories regarding them, which I picked up in the country. They may be considered as contemporary records, for when I collected them, the brigand-brothers were alive, and pursuing their vocation with admirable activity.

The Vardarelli were of the superior class of peasantry—good Catholics, and faithful subjects of his Majesty Ferdinand IV.—at least, so they styled themselves, when, during the French occupation of the kingdom, irritated, some say, by the oppression of the foreigners, they took to the road, and levied

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contributions, after the manner of their loyal countrymen in Calabria. They did not, it is true, confine their operations to the despoiling of the French and the officers of government—but then the mass of the Neapolitan nation became infected with Gallic principles, and untrue to the legitimate King—consequently amenable to the vengeance of the Vardarelli, as long as they had anything to lose.

The birth-place of these heroes was said to be somewhere in the mountains of the Abruzzi; but the spot where they first made themselves known as public characters, and which their exploits rendered famous for so many years, was the valley of the Bridge of Bovino—a long, narrow pass, through which runs the only road from Naples to the vast plains of Apulia, the province of Bari, Lecce, &c. I passed by the Ponte di Bovino early in the year 1816, when the mere mention of its name caused fear and trembling. I have been there several times since; the last time in 1824, when the vigilance and severity of General del Carretto had decorated it with the heads and mangled quarters of some half dozen of more modern, but less conspicuous brigands. It always struck me as being an admirable place for robbers—a circumstance equally perceptible to the people of the country; for though

they have ceased since the days of the Vardarelli to form organized bands there, they have never failed *de tems en tems* to lie in ambuscade,\* and commit robberies. The pass is in general steep, and in some points very narrow; a deep ravine, through which froths and roars a mountain stream in the winter season, is on one side of the road—hills covered with trees or underwood lie on the other. In its whole length, which may be about fifteen miles, there are no habitations, save some curious caves cut in the face of the rock, a post-house, and a most villainous-looking taverna, where, as I shall presently show, I once passed a night—and that, too, when my head was full of Mrs. Radcliffe, and banditti, and I quite new in the country. In some places the hill and the wood, or concealing thicket, is so close on the road on the one hand, and the ravine on

\* The postilions here have always a dog with them, that is taught to run about a hundred yards a-head of the horses, and to bark if he see or scent anybody lurking near the road. These dogs are said to be remarkably sure and sagacious. If the postilions hear them bark, they turn their horses' heads, and gallop back. I once underwent a retrograde motion of this sort, and I never travelled so fast in my life, as the last time I returned through the Val di Bovino, with the Prince D'I——, in the middle of the night. Spite of the ascent, the postilion, who seemed to be in a fever of affright, galloped his horses nearly all the way.

the other, that it is really quite enticing. A shot from the one, and the man's business is done—and there yawns a dark, capacious grave, to receive his body when deprived of what it is worth. And then, as regards security, who would follow the experienced robber through the mountain-wood, or down the ravine, or be able to trace him to the hiding-places and holes in the rocks that abound there? Across the mountains he has a wide range of savage country, without roads—without a path: on the other side of the chasm the localities are equally favourable; here he can, if hard-pressed and long, throw himself into the impenetrable forests of Mount Garganus, there into the not less remote and safe recesses of Monte Voltur.

Over the narrowest part of the valley, situated on the summit of a lofty and abrupt mountain, frown the dark walls of the town of Bovino, like the castle of a feudal chief—the more honoured robber of earlier times. I never went up to the town, but I well remember that its inhabitants had a very bad name.

In this valley, then, the Vardarelli remained for many years, and many years will yet pass ere the traveller shall traverse it without hearing stories



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about them. During the short reign at Naples of Joseph Buonaparte, or,

“ In good King Joseph’s days, when ’twas the fashion  
To *kill* the French, poor people ! to excess,”

these robbers were so formidable, they so entirely commanded the valley of Bovino, that rarely could a company of travellers pass without being stopped ; a Government officer, a Government mail, or the revenue from the provinces, never without a little army for an escort. And all these troops were at times unable to afford protection, but were themselves beaten off, or slaughtered by the brigands. A journey to the capital from the Apulian provinces, was then to the peaceful inhabitants (always, be it said, rather timid travellers,) an undertaking of solemn importance and peril ; before embarking on which, not only were tapers burned under every saint of the calendar, and every Madonna that could show a portrait, but wills were made, and such tearful adieus, that one might have thought the Val di Bovino the real valley of death, or that the wayfarers were a forlorn hope going to storm a fortress, whose walls were cannon-ball and

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grape-shot, with gunpowder for their cement and their base.

Joseph Buonaparte once went through this pass to visit the provinces of his kingdom, situated beyond them. An immense force went with him, yet the robbers were heard to say afterwards, that had they known of the movement in time, they would have reinforced their troop with some other bands from the mountains of Basilicata and Calabria; pounced upon the false King, and, God willing, carried him off, through the provinces just named, to Sicily, to the true King Ferdinand and the English. This might have been a mere bravado. The execution of such a plan would have been a splendid episode in the annals of brigandism.

It is to be remarked, that at this time the French confidently asserted, that the brigands here, as well as in Calabria, were protected and subsidized by the British Government, and that the robber chiefs at the Ponte di Bovino were in possession of commissions signed by George III.

Joachim Murat, who succeeded his brother-in-law, whom Napoleon chose to transfer to Spain, was a man of more energy than Joseph, and with

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infinitely less talent contrived to render his government more popular, and indeed better than his immediate predecessor's. He set to work vigorously against the robbers, whose party was weakened as his gained strength, and as the nation at large gradually believed that the dominion of the French was this time to be an enduring one, and began to forget their (in every way) natural Sovereign, old Ferdinand.

The excursions of the robbers were checked, or limited; they could no longer range whole provinces, but at the Ponte di Bovino they were almost inexpugnable; and such were the advantages of the position, and the talents of the leaders of the band, that they continued to levy occasional contributions and to elude all the vigilance of the numerous *gens-d'armes* and police scattered over the country. At times, when they had not been heard of for weeks—for months—they would suddenly intercept the government *procaccio*, or carry off a party of travellers (known by them to be people of substance,) to their recesses in the mountains, where they would detain them until ransomed.

An event of the latter kind I had described to

me at the not-distant town of Foggia, by the Marchesa —, a native of the place, and one of the heroines of her own tale.

A marriage in the family was to take place—an important marriage, which, it was determined, from various considerations, should be celebrated at the capital. Accordingly, after due preparation, every thing was ready for departure:—bride and bridegroom, fathers and mothers, *compares* and *com-mares*, brothers and sisters, cousins of both genders, relations of all degrees, and friends—a formidable caravan (numerically speaking) of itself, set off one fine morning from Foggia, with a valorous escort of Neapolitan gens-d'armes. They crossed the open plain, they reached the Ponte di Bovino—the robbers had not been heard of for a long time—all was quiet! The people at the post-house, near the bridge, at the mouth of the valley, gave the most satisfactory accounts—and on the party went. They went as far as the most convenient spot for a robber's attack, but no farther; for there the cries of "*ferma assassini*," "*faccia in terra*," were heard; the mounted gens-d'armes turned their horses' heads, and galloped off, and in the next minute the whole line of carriages was surrounded by the bri-

gands, with their long guns in their hands, and their knives in their belts.

The general practice of these robbers, when no more than personal spoliation is contemplated, is to make their patients lie down on the ground, (*stare faccia in terra* technically speaking,) and then, while one set keep watch over them, with their guns double cocked and aimed at them, another set proceed to rifle them. But now the sufferers were surrounded by a portion of the robbers, and marched up the hill's side into the woods, where they waited until the "other gentlemen" had unpacked the carriages, and brought up the valuables. They then all set off together, and after a march, very fatiguing to the Foggia gentry—particularly to the poor ladies, they halted at a large, low hut, in the middle of a thick wood. They were forced into the hut, where they found a group of women and children, and a rogue in the dress of a Capuchin friar, playing at scopo\* with an old beldam. There were two or three long benches in the hut, and on these, trembling and exhausted, the party sat down. Their apprehensions were of a very horrid nature. They expected something worse

\* A Neapolitan game at cards, played *in duo*.

than robbery and captivity; for many of the banditti began to drink wine, and to honour the ladies of the party with their very particular attention. My friend the Marchesa — was a younger woman then than when I had the honour of her acquaintance; the bride was very handsome, and more than one of the bride's-maids were, at least, young. Just, however, as their alarm was reaching its most exquisite point, a noise was heard without the hut, and to the sounds of Don Gaetano, Don Ignazio, two men, better attired, and of superior mien to the rest of the robbers, entered the hut—and all was silent! They were two of the chiefs. Encouraged by the more humane aspect of these men, the husband of mine informant approached them, and begged for protection for himself and party—the ladies joined in his entreaties.

“ You have nothing to fear, Signor Marchese,” said one of the chiefs, “ you are in the hands of gentlemen, the faithful subjects of his Majesty Ferdinand IV.”

The Marchese expressed his satisfaction at the assurance, but begged he might be allowed to get out of such company, and continue his journey.

“ We know you, Signor Marchese,” said the

chief, "and that you can afford a good ransom. We must detain you here until one of your servants goes to Foggia, and returns with it to a place we shall appoint."

This, to say the least of it, was a very uncomfortable prospect. The day was declining—it was impossible that the operations required by the robbers could be performed until the morrow, and there was no appearance of a single bed; the hut smoked, and smelt unpleasantly of mutton, for the women had commenced roasting a whole sheep, wool and all; in short, putting danger out of the question, and without calculating the number of ducats to be disbursed, it was a very uncomfortable prospect for the Marchese. He was feeling all this, when suddenly he was struck by the bronzed visage of a man he thought he had seen before somewhere. The Marchesa thought so too, when told to look at him. As she looked, something like a tear came to the fellow's eyes; he threw his long gun in a corner, and, crossing the room, took the Marchesa's hand, and respectfully kissed it. It was Gaetano, once their servant, a man to whom they had behaved with great kindness, years before, at Foggia.

After a proper recognition, this robber took the

captains aside, and talked to them with great earnestness. His eloquence was effective. A minute or two after, the chiefs told the Marchese that he and his companions might continue their journey, after leaving, in addition to what had been taken from the carriages, the property they had about them. There was a little murmuring among the robbers; but it was the will of the chiefs that so it should be! Their voices soon imposed silence. The gentlemen and ladies, glad to be off instantly at any cost, began emptying their pockets, and unburdening themselves of every thing, save essential clothing, under the eyes of the banditti, who contented themselves by passing their hands over their persons, to feel if nothing were concealed—just as a custom-house officer may do. The young bride, however, with all her fears, was very tenacious of a pretty pair of drop ear-rings. An impatient, brutal robber, stretched out his brawny hand, and pulled at them, until she shrieked with pain. On seeing this indecorous deed, one of the chiefs, without saying a word, raised the butt-end of his musket. It descended with tremendous force on the ruffian's arm, which instantly fell helplessly by his side. It seemed broken by the blow.

The fellow uttered a cry and a horrid oath, laid



his other hand to the knife in his girdle; but he merely touched it, and slunk away to the farther end of the hut, feeling, perhaps, how injudicious it would be to attempt avenging himself on a chief, and in such a place as that, where he was surrounded by men devoted to him.

The travellers then descended the hill, in matter and spirits much lighter than they ascended it. Their carriages were found where they had left them on the road, along which two or three peasants alone were riding on asses, secure in their own poverty, and indifferent to the scene of the empty carozze, and broken boxes, and scattered packing-cases, they had just passed, and perfectly well understood, for such things were common in those days at the Ponte Bovini.

The postilions and drivers were for the most part collected, after a little delay; the chiefs assured the company that, from the reputation of "brava gente," given to them by Gaetano, they were safe for the rest of their journey, and their return from Naples even; and La Signora Marchesa and spouse, bride, bridegroom, and all, set off as merrily as could be expected, up the pass, towards the mountain-town of Ariana, the opposite termination of the Val di Bovino.

During the remainder of the reign of Murat, who was destined himself to be put to death like a brigand in Calabria, where his officers had committed such cruelties for the extirpation of banditti, this band prosecuted their calling with greater or less activity, according to circumstances. Many were the robberies they committed, but their acts of cruelty were few. Their favourite prize continued to be the *procaccio*, a kind of waggon, which travels night and day to the capital, with remittances from the receivers of the different provinces; it also carries merchandize, goods, parcels, and even passengers, and is generally escorted by an armed force.\*

\* “ A famous captain of banditti, who, during the latter part of the occupation of the kingdom by Murat, had successively gained possession of the contents of fourteen of these *procacci*, is said to have brought them all to the legitimate Sovereign (Ferdinand,) on his restoration, and to have obtained his pardon in consequence.”—K. Craven’s Tour.

The same gentleman gives the following amusing incidents.

“ Some years back, a gang, or, as it is called in the language of the country, a *comitiva*, of robbers, having seized the *procaccio* going from Naples to the principal town in the province of *Basilicata*, with all the paraphernalia appertaining to the Court of Justice, newly established there, thought it a very excellent joke to put on the judges’ robes and wigs, and go through the mock

When the important revolutions in Europe of 1814 and 1815 proved again the dictum of Ariosto, that the lily of France is destined never to take root in Italy, and Murat was hurled from his throne, the Vardarelli, as faithful subjects of his restored Majesty Ferdinand, are said to have imitated the example of sundry of their *co-laborateurs*, and to have proposed renouncing their calling on conditions. But it is also said that the conditions were not agreed to by the Government; and the notorious fact is, that even when there were no more Frenchmen in the kingdom, the robbers of the Ponte di Bovino continued their depredations, paying no more respect to the revenue of Ferdinand, than they had done to Joachim's.

ceremony of a trial; the judicial forms of which most of them were but too well acquainted with. This self-elected tribunal pronounced sentence of death on the very first traveller who might fall in their hands; and the day did not pass without an opportunity of carrying it into execution."—This was carrying the joke too far!

"At Orsara, a small village between Bovino and Troja, the usual amusement of the boys on a feast-day is to divide themselves into two bands, one of which guards a little wooden cart, filled with rubbish, representing the *procaccio*, while the other performs the more glorious part of the *comitiva*, which attacks it, and which, it is needless to add, always gains the victory."—Bring up a child in the way he should go, &c.

The first time I went through the valley of Bovino, was, as I have said, early in the year 1816, not nine months after the happy restoration alluded to, and the Vardarelli were then in high feather. God knows I heard enough of them from my fellow-travellers long before I approached the spot; and for my further edification, when, crawling over the Apulian plain, which I thought was to have no end, we came in sight of the high mountains and the town of Bovino, and the dark-looking gap beneath it, they recapitulated every horror. It was evening when we reached the post-house by the famous bridge at the mouth of the valley. Here four miserable-looking gens-d'armes *à pied*, with their carbines slung over their shoulders, got up in the front of our still more miserable-looking vettura, for our protection. I could not help thinking that our poverty was our best protection, as related to such a respectable band as the Vardarelli. The living part of the cargo consisted of a fat mendicant friar, a student, an old Greek woman from Corfu, who seemed to be the grandmother of all the Greek priests in the city of Lecce, where I had embarked with her; a pretty *paesana*, who was going to see a brother at Naples, who had been promoted to the rank of serjeant in the Royal

Guards; myself, and a run-a-way English sailor I had picked up starving at Barletta, and was carrying on to the capital. Of one thing I was quite sure—that the soldiers, in case the robbers condescended to assault us, would be the first to run away, or perform the *faccia in terra* movement, and I would about as soon have given my three carlins to the robbers as to the gens-d'armes, which I was obliged to do at the end of their ride. My companions, however, were sorely afraid. The wild scene, and the time, and their whispering voices, (for the open-mouthed sonorous tones of the south had dropped into a general whisper as we went up the gloomy valley,) did at last affect me, and I was glad when we reached our station for the night, the solitary taverna, though a more desolate, cut-throat looking place, can hardly be conceived.\*

\* The Rev. T. S. Hughes, one of the few English travellers that have gone through the valley of Bovino, and who must have passed somewhat more than a year before my first visit, gives this anecdote. “An occurrence had taken place connected with the very last journey of this vehicle (the *procaccio*) which threw all the country into alarm, and made every one advise us to proceed by sea to Naples. At a celebrated pass in the Apennines, called the Ponte di Bovino, a large corps of brigands, concealed behind the rocks, had fired a volley upon the carriage,

It was about a year after this that I was wandering in the same country, but in a different manner, for I had had enough of vetturini and their passengers. I had come on horseback from Lecce to Bari with the courier or post-carrier, travelling the whole of one dark cold night and one day

killed the horses and postilion, burned all the letters, taken out an unfortunate officer, whom they shot on the spot, and carried away a still more unfortunate female to their haunts in the mountains. Traces of this outrage presented themselves to our eyes in numerous musket-balls at this time sticking in the body of the machine; but we judged it expedient to proceed immediately after the commission of such an act, since it was not very likely that it would be soon repeated. The terrors of our Italian companions amused us during the journey; but at the fatal pass their reason seemed almost overcome by their fears, which were not a little increased by a terrific thunder-storm, whose echoes were finely reverberated among the rocks and valleys. We stayed at the post-house two hours before the storm abated, and when we arrived at the spot where the late attack had been made, we observed one of the horses lying by the road-side, and its flesh already half stripped from the carcase by birds of prey. As for the banditti, we saw none of them, except a few wretches bound with cords, in custody of the peasants, who, after this last outrage, had collected together in large bodies, headed by their priests, dispersed the villains from their haunts, and rescued the captive lady, much to the credit of Italian gallantry."—*Travels in Greece and Albania*, Vol. II. p. 491.

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without stopping, except to change horses, and take a hurried morsel of food. (A very fatiguing journey, be it said, and rendered the more so by my having no English saddle with me, and from being obliged to ride on every possible variety of villainous Neapolitan machinery !) This hasty way of proceeding would not suit for the rest of the country I wished to traverse, which was very interesting, and which I had never yet examined. So at Bari I determined to hire horses by the day, and from place to place, taking a man with the second horse with me, to return the beasts, and to act as my guide. I rode in one short delightful day from Bari to Barletta. Here again my ears were filled with tales of my old friends the Vardarelli, who had become naughtier than ever. Several people persuaded me not to continue my journey as I was doing, for I was now approaching their range of country, and I had some difficulty in hiring a man and horses. The next day, however, I struck over the plain of Apulia, visited the site of ancient Cannæ, and arrived in the afternoon at the town of Canosa, just in time to see a fight between some Carbonari and Caldarari, in which two men of the place were nearly killed, and one killed outright. What with factions and robbers

this part of the kingdom of Naples was then in a pretty state !

I made Canosa my head-quarters for more than a week, exploring the country thence every day, and returning to sleep at night. Whilst staying here, the following news was received one morning, and disconcerted a coursing match I had engaged in with some gentlemen of the town.

A Major ———, a Swiss officer of talent and well-known courage in the service of King Ferdinand, had been sent down to Barletta with a force of light horse and light infantry, to keep the robbers in check, and if possible to destroy them. In consequence of some concerted plan, or of some hints given him, he marched from Barletta to Cerignola, a small town on the opposite side of the wild plain, a day or two after I quitted the former place. Lying quiet and *perdu* at Cerignola, he had received information in the night of the day before the news reached us at Canosa, that the Vardarelli had advanced again into the open country, and had taken possession of a *masseria*, or farm-house, not far off. He instantly put his men in motion, but it was daylight before he reached the masseria. The robbers were on the alert ; they had not, however, time to saddle and mount before



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the place was surrounded by the troops, who might be about ten times their number. Major —— thought he had them in a trap, and sent forward a non-commissioned officer to summon them to surrender. The answer of the Vardarelli was pronounced by a musket, which wounded the soldier, and sent him groaning to the rear. The Swiss then determined to storm the masseria, but the walls that surrounded it were high and strong, he had no artillery, and when his men approached the heavy entrance gate, the robbers within fired at them through loop-holes, resting their long guns in the little embrasures, with so deadly an aim, that two were left dead, three or four wounded, the rest ran back as fast as their legs could carry them. The bold Swiss then encouraged his troops as best he could, and headed a number of them in a fresh attack on the gate; but his men were Neapolitans, the greater part of them slunk behind, and he himself was soon forced to fall back out of the robber's range of fire with a wound in the hand.

While storming from the pain he suffered, and at the pusillanimity of those he commanded, to his no small surprise Major —— saw the gate a few minutes after thrown open, and the robbers issue forth well mounted and armed. Almost before he

could give the word of command to concentrate, the Vardarelli dashed through the line of the beleaguers, who made way for them, and galloped across the plain. He put his cavalry in motion after them; but the men, protesting that their horses were no match for the fresh ones of the robbers, soon drew rein. The Vardarelli then halted, and after a shout of insulting triumph, calmly trotted off towards the mountains.

This event naturally made a great noise (like the Russian drum among the Armenians in Hajji Baba,) "all over the country," and as in prosecution of my journey I had to go through the valley of Bovino again, or into the very den of the robbers, innumerable were the warnings I received. A young lady of the house where I had been staying at Canosa, thought my peril so imminent, that in bidding me farewell, and recommending me to the Madonna's protection, and pronouncing in her patois, "*Dio velo manda buono Don Carlo*,"\* absolutely shed tears. But I was eighteen years of age then, and tolerably adventurous; and, not to put my courage in too prominent a light, pretty confident that the Vardarelli would not notice a whimsical traveller with nothing but a little port-

\* God send you well through it!

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manteau and a sketch-book at his back, and a few ducats in his pocket. (As for the steeds I procured, two such wretched hacks were never seen since Bolingbroke mounted King Richard.) Not to be too fool-hardy, however, as my friends flattered me by saying I looked *troppo distinto* (too distinguished a personage) as I was, I procured a rough brown peasant's cloak, which I wore over my English garments, and substituted the high conical hat of the country for my travelling cap. This *travestimento* was very complete. My own mother would hardly have known me, and as I rode down the hill on which Canosa stands, I nearly tumbled over my horse's ears, by laughing at the figure I was cutting.

That evening I stopped at Castelluccio, a little village very near the Ponte di Bovino, with a reputation little superior to Bovino itself. As I rode into the village after my guide, a lazy cooper of Canosa, I met three fellows with long guns walking leisurely out of it. They stared at us, but did nothing but interchange the "*buona sera*" (good evening!) with us. My man of the butts and casks would have it they were robbers. It might have been so, for they were ill-visaged dogs, but they never troubled me, though the bugs at my hostel at Castelluccio did most cruelly.

On starting the next morning very early, my companion regretted that no chapel was open in the village where he could *rinfrascarsi l'anima con una messa*, (refresh his soul with a mass,) and when we entered into the mouth of the valley, there was no end to his crossing himself. I rode through the Val di Bovino, however, just as safely as I had done the year before, and reached the lofty town of Ariana, where all danger from robbers was supposed to cease, just as the sun was setting on one of the most extensive and lovely scenes it has been my lot to observe.

Shortly after my arrival at Naples, I learned that King Ferdinand, whose reign had been marked by two flights from his capital and continental dominions, and numerous other humiliations, had set the final signet to his debasement, by treating with and finally signing an act of capitulation with the Vardarelli, who were thenceforth admitted to his service and pay. The whole band was allowed to form a regular corps, still commanded by the same leaders, who received a monthly salary, and engaged to secure the valley of Bovino and the provinces which they had so long ravaged, from all similar attacks for the future. People in the capital stared at each other

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when this news was announced, and they reflected on the qualities of the contracting parties—a Bourbon Prince, the King of the Two Sicilies, and an Abruzzese peasant, a brigand chief. But so it was! and even so weak was this Despotic Government.

From the year 1817 to 1823, I never visited the robbers' country, but I am fortunate in being able to avail myself of the tour of the Honourable Richard Keppel Craven, who tracing in part my footsteps in 1818, or little more than a year after I had heard so much of their prowess at Canosa, witnessed the final extinction of the Vardarelli band in Foggia, another town in the same vast Apulian plain. Besides affording a finale to my story of the Vardarelli, Mr. Craven's sketches so confirm and endue with superior interest many points of the story itself, that I shall make free to quote from them at some length.

“The most celebrated troop of robbers in our days, was that of the Vardarelli, who invested the provinces of Apulia and the borders of Basilicata and Abruzzi, and were supposed to have collected immense wealth. To trace the progress of a life like theirs, would be a difficult but not uninteresting task: by turns, soldiers, deserters, partisans, and

traitors—by turns, imprisoned, punished, penitent, restored to society, or relapsed into guilt—exhibiting traits of singular personal bravery, united to instances of the most extraordinary cunning—and occasional proofs of disinterestedness, contrasted with rapacity the most unbridled;—the recital of their adventures would by far surpass the legends of our most illustrious highwaymen, footpads, or smugglers.

“ This band selected Apulia as the theatre best adapted to their system of depredations: its vast, uninclosed plains, occasionally interspersed with patches of underwood, but in no part offering obstacles to the rapidity of their movements; the rare occurrence of large towns; the magnitude of the farms or *masserias*, where they were sure to find provisions, forage, and booty united; all these circumstances combining with their local knowledge of the country, and the terror which they had impressed on its inhabitants, had rendered their power sufficiently formidable to resist, or at least elude, the means pursued by Government for their destruction. Well armed and accoutred, and excellently mounted, their troop was also trained to the most rigid discipline; and Don Gaetano, the elder of the brothers Vardarelli, as well as com-

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mander of the band, displayed an activity and skill worthy of a nobler profession. It should be observed that they seldom, if ever, attacked travellers; and their outrages were generally unsullied by cruelty, except in some cases of revenge for breach of promise: but this false glare of generosity and forbearance, as well as the ample rewards which they bestowed upon their spies and abettors, and the acts of charity by which they endeavoured to propitiate the feelings of the poorer class, rendered them only a more destructive scourge to the community at large. A person who had been a severe sufferer by their misdeeds very justly observed to me, that it was very easy to give a hundred ducats to the poor out of the thousands stolen from the rich; and as their generosity could be estimated by this rule only, the motives of it may be duly appreciated.

“ The Apulian farms consist of several buildings appropriated to the different branches of rural economy, which the nature of the soil admits of; and the number of individuals employed in the various departments of labour is sometimes very great, especially during the winter season, when the cattle are all collected in the *masseria* for the sake of a milder abode. All these attendants and

their superiors, including the *agente*, or what we should call the steward, reside within the walls which always enclose these establishments. The reader may easily form some idea of the panic spread by the appearance of the Vardarelli in one of these colonies, composed chiefly of timid shepherds and their families, or labourers, as unused to the exercise as they are unprovided with the means of resistance.

“ The robbers’ marches, generally performed in the night-time, were so incredibly rapid, that the terror they inspired was equalled only by the astonishment created by operations apparently supernatural; and they have been known to have remained two or three days in one of these farms, before the inmates of those adjoining have been aware of their proximity. During this time they usually feasted on whatever the premises afforded, always obliging their inhabitants to partake of the fare prepared for them, through fear of poison. On an occasion of this nature, when the principal agents of the farm excused themselves from eating meat because it was a fast-day, Don Gaetano approved their abstinence, which, he assured them, quite agreed with his practice in general; but alleged his mode of life, and the uncertainty of his dinner-hour, as



an apology for the infraction of it. On removing from the scene of action, they always took with them what money could be collected, and as much grain as their horses could carry.

“ Sometimes the demand, or rather command for forage, cash, provisions, and even clothes, was not made personally, but imposed through the medium of a letter to the superintendent of the farm. Neglect, or even delay, in complying with the summons, or the most distant appearance of treachery, was followed by the destruction of the cattle, and the conflagration of the buildings. In these cases the mandate was confided to a peasant or labourer, whom the troop might meet accidentally. Frequently they would stop passengers, and exact the exchange of good fresh horses against their own jaded ones ; while more than once they have merely bartered their silver against an equivalent sum in gold which might be found upon the person of the traveller.” \*

For some time after their treaty with King Ferdinand, the Vardarelli very correctly kept their part of the engagement, and no robberies were heard of at the Ponte di Bovino, or in that neighbourhood. There was, however, a long accumulated account

\* Tour through the Southern Provinces of Naples.

of vengeance scored against them in the hearts of many individuals who had suffered from their rapacity or violence ; the Government, moreover, was said both to fear that by some sudden revulsion they would adopt their old modes of life, and to nourish a vindictive feeling against the men who had foiled them so often. Indeed, it was currently reported in the capital at the time, that the quarrel in which the daring brothers fell, was excited by the treacherous emissaries of Government, who thus hoped to rid themselves of the Vardarelli without the open odium of treachery and cruelty to men they had honoured with a capitulation. Either of these causes might have produced the effect, or it might very well have been produced by a union of the two. Mr. Craven only alludes to the more apparent one.

“ But it was not to be expected that so lawless a confederation should long continue faithful to their engagements, or that the inhabitants, smarting under the infliction of outrages so recent, should ever look upon the authors of them with any feelings but those of mistrust or revenge : in fact, about a month previous to my quitting Naples, they had been engaged in a serious contest

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with the natives of an Albanian\* village, called Ururi, on the borders of the Abruzzo; and these last, rising in superior numbers, killed the three brothers with nine of the troop, and compelled the remainder to seek their safety in flight. It was said that the principal promoter of this affray had lost his father by the hands of the Vardarelli. From that period the remnant of the band had retired to the neighbouring mountains, and had, under various pretences, eluded the order which they received, to unite, and present themselves at a stated spot, where the affair should be investigated. Aware, probably, of having been the aggressors in the conflict which terminated so fatally to their leaders, or, distrustful of the intentions of Government, they had delayed obeying its commands; and I had purposely retarded my departure from the capital, to avoid the risk of falling in with them on

\* There are several colonies of these Albanians, who have emigrated at different times, in the Southern Provinces of the Kingdom of Naples. They retain their own language, which they always speak among themselves, but they all speak the language of the country as well. They are a fine, robust race, and have the reputation of being daring fellows! I have seen some of their women eminently beautiful.

their way to the head-quarters of the district,\* where it was expected that by this time they might in all probability have arrived. At Troja, indeed, I was induced to look upon this event as certain, for that portion of their corps, which was dismounted, consisting of about thirteen, had assembled there a short time before.”†

We are now come to “the last scene of all, which ends this strange eventful history,” and here Mr. Craven’s narrative possesses the interest that only an eye-witness can give.

“At last I arrived at Foggia, the capital of the Capitanata, which has gates, but no walls, the houses being so irregularly scattered about, that it is difficult to fix precisely where the town begins. I could find no lodgings at the numerous inns which displayed their signs on either side of me, but were already filled by the arrivals for the ensuing fair, so that I had penetrated some way into the city before there appeared any chance of being accom-

\* Foggia.

† In the streets of Troja, Mr. Craven saw two of the Vardarelli band, whose stature and martial air, heightened by a picturesque but irregular uniform, attracted his attention to a degree which his guide thought it prudent to repress, by informing him of their quality and profession.

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modated at all ; when, just as I had turned out of a street, or rather square, in which I had observed some troops drawn out as for a parade, a sudden volley of musketry, which I took for the crash of a building falling, followed by a general flight of the inhabitants, uttering cries of terror and dismay, arrested my attention : soon after, a gentleman hurrying by, desired me to alight, which I did, though utterly unable to guess the motive of this advice ; while a second as strenuously recommended my remounting my horse and galloping away. The first idea that darted across my mind was that of an earthquake, and a number of persons rushing at once out of an adjoining house tended to confirm it. I walked on, in vain addressing the fugitives who passed me in every direction, till a boy took my horse's bridle and led him through some obscure by-streets to an inn at the skirts of the town, where we took refuge in a room on the ground-floor, into which my servants and guide, together with all the horses and myself, entered as if by one common instinct, but still in total ignorance of the cause of alarm. The cries of several women, tearing their hair, and the incoherent exclamations they uttered, among which I could only distinguish the word *brigands*, at last led me to conjecture that a party

of banditti had forced their way into the town, and were engaged with the regular troops. The door had been carefully barricaded at the moment of our entrance; but through the small windows several soldiers were observable lurking about in parties, with their muskets ready, and at times a dragoon passed at full gallop, apparently engaged in pursuit. These circumstances, and occasional musket-shots, confirmed my suspicions; but that a gang of robbers, however daring and desperate, should have made an attack at mid-day on a large city respectably garrisoned, seemed so improbable that I continued in a state of doubt, till the son of my hostess made his appearance; and after being repeatedly kissed and wept upon by his mother and her dishevelled companions, he gave me a clearer insight into the affair, by relating, in an imperfect manner, the details, which were subsequently made known to me from a source more authentic, and which are as follows.

“The remainder of the Vardarelli band had presented themselves that morning at Foggia; they formed, in fact, part of the troops I had seen, and were at the moment I passed engaged in a war of words, which soon was waged with more deadly weapons. It seems that the general, who had

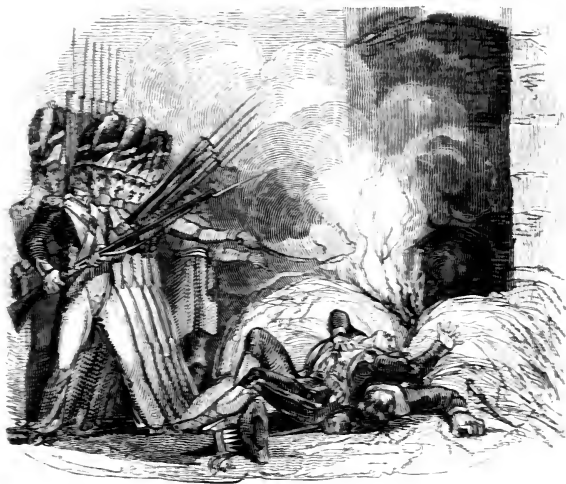
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received the intimation of their arrival, gave orders for them to be inspected the instant it took place. After they had dismounted and given a satisfactory account of their late proceedings, they received directions to repair to Lucera, and there await further commands. This mandate they positively refused to obey, and a long altercation took place between them and an officer sent from the commander's house, before which they were ranged, to remonstrate on the imprudence, not to say temerity of their behaviour. The general finally commanded the two leaders to repair to his own apartment to speak to them: this they objected to do without their arms, which they declared they would never part from; and it is supposed that the language they made use of in the course of their argument so exasperated the officer, that he roughly pushed one of them back, who was using threatening gestures; on which the other fired his musket at him, but having missed his mark, was shot dead on the spot by the sentry at the gate. This was the signal of an attack from his companions, that was immediately answered by a round of musketry from the troops who were drawn out close to them, which killed several, and spread consternation among the crowds of townspeople who had assem-

bled on the spot. Four of the band, who had presence of mind to spring upon their horses, escaped in different directions out of the town, though followed by cavalry, and fired at as they fled. Another portion were made prisoners; but a third division sought security in a cellar, the first place of refuge which offered itself, and which having only one very low entrance, afforded them a defensible asylum for some time: the depth and darkness of this receptacle made it difficult to attack them with success, for they killed a soldier, and wounded several others who had ventured too near the aperture. Of this last desperate set, four, however, gave themselves up, and made known the number that remained. In order to bring as speedy a termination as possible to the dismay and agitation which this event had spread throughout the city, two of those who had been last taken were sent in to their companions with their hands tied, to persuade them to surrender, and to inform them that if they persevered in a resistance, which, from the local nature of their retreat, must be unavailing, a straw fire would be lighted at the orifice, as the only means of hastening their compliance or destruction. The unfortunate men never returned, and no answer being



**Banditti and Robbers.**



**THE LAST SCENE OF THE VARDARELLI BAND.**



given, this threat was put into actual execution, and the aperture blocked up with stones. Imagination pictures their situation as most horrible; but its terrors were eluded by the last resource of despair. Two hours afterwards the cellar was entered without opposition, and their lifeless bodies, covered with wounds, indicated the death they had received at each other's hands.

"In about five hours some degree of tranquillity was restored to the city; and it was evident that the feelings of alarm occasioned by this singular event, and even those of aversion and universal reprobation which the excesses of the banditti had excited, now yielded to emotions of compassion, called forth by so terrific and untimely a death. Even the policy which prompted this severe punishment met with comments and constructions by no means favourable to those whose duty it was to inflict it.

"In the evening the shops were re-opened, and I ventured to send my letters of recommendation to the General Commandant of the division, and the Intendente, who both showed me every attention and civility during my stay. But I had with me a document of similar import addressed to a very different character.

“ On my leaving Benevento, one of its most respectable inhabitants, fearing I might encounter the Vardarelli troop on their way to head-quarters, gave me a letter of introduction to one of them, which he assured me would be the means of securing me from all such danger as the existing uncertainty of their projects and movements might render possible if not probable. The robber to whom it was addressed had been employed on a farm of the writer, and retained a friendly and even respectful feeling towards his former master, which had shown itself on several occasions since they had parted. Curiosity led me to inquire whether this person was among the survivors of the dreadful catastrophe of the morning ; and having sent to the prison where they were confined, for the purpose of ascertaining the fact, I was answered in the affirmative, and conducted, as I imagined, to the cell which contained the object of my inquiries. It seems that the substance of my message having been conveyed from mouth to mouth, had undergone a material change in its purport ; and before I was rendered aware of the misunderstanding, I found myself in a low vaulted room, at the back of the public prisons, and standing opposite to several naked bodies exposed on some straw. One of these was

pointed out to me as that of the individual whom I sought.

“The infliction of a sudden and violent death on a robust and active frame is far from producing those effects which the repeated attacks of disease, or the gradual decay of the vital powers, leave impressed in characters so awful or offensive on the human countenance. The setting rays of the same sun which had cast its morning radiance on beings moving in the full energy of existence, now shone on their lifeless but not inexpressive features. The turmoil of passions which had agitated the last dreadful moments of their existence was visibly, though variously depicted, in every face, nor could the expression be mistaken; the sullen brow strongly contracted over the glaring eyeball, the pallid lip curled to a sardonic smile, each bespoke the final agonies of desperate bravery, ineffectual revenge, or the hopeless struggles of expiring crime.

“The colour of the cheeks was fixed, but not extinct, and nought but the attitude was that of death. They had been stripped of every article, save the reliquaries, or consecrated images, which the lower classes in Italy invariably wear round their neck, and which now rested on the ghastly

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wounds that disfigured their bodies, some of which were also blackened by smoke. None of these men were above the age of forty, while most of them were considerably younger. It was said that individuals of every nation were to be found in their ranks; but I believe that a Frenchman and an Hungarian were the only two who were not natives of Italy.”\*

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Thus ended the famous Vardarelli. The following amusing particulars are also from the pen of the gentleman who so vividly represented the scenes of their destruction. Mr. Craven went from Foggia to Cerignola,† another town in the plain of Apulia.

“A letter, which I had brought from Foggia to the Syndic, procured me a visit from that gentleman, and an apology for some delay in making it,

\* Hon. R. Keppel Craven’s Tour through the Southern Provinces of Naples.—Chapters II. and III.

† Cerignola, or Cirignola, is famous in Italian history for the victory which Gonsalvo de Cordova gained over the French in 1503. The French General, the Duc de Nemours, lost his life, and the victory of the Great Captain secured the possession of the kingdom of Naples for his master Ferdinando el Cattolico.

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occasioned by the return of his brother from the adjoining province of Basilicata, where, only a few days before, he had been carried by a party of fourteen brigands. This had happened on the very evening of that day which witnessed the destruction of the Vardarelli, and though the parties had no connexion with each other, the coincidence was remarkable. It seems that this *comitiva* was but lately organized, and had hitherto confined its practices within the boundaries of Basilicata, to which it belonged; but tempted by the reputed wealth of the Syndic of Cirignola, the banditti had lain in ambush for a whole night, near a house and farm which he possessed, three miles from the town, and after waiting all the next day, which his brother had spent there, in the act of superintending the rural concerns of the family, they seized upon him and an attendant at dusk, just as they were preparing to go home; and, crossing the Ofanto, which, at no great distance from the spot, divides the two provinces, they forced him to walk thirty miles in the course of that night, to reach the mountain of Melfi. Here they halted among the woody recesses, which afforded them a secure retreat, and detained him, while they sent back his servant with the terms they fixed for his ransom,

and powers to negotiate for its payment. The demand which they at first advanced was so exorbitant, that the wretched prisoner, aware of the inability of his relatives to raise a sum so considerable, assured them that they might as well kill him at once as require it. To this they very indignantly replied, that they were not wretches capable of committing murder, and assured him that he need fear no personal injury; although they had, for the sake of expedition and safety, urged the speed of his nocturnal progress by occasional blows, and followed his person with slight, but frequent applications of the well-sharpened points of their stilettos. They lowered, however, their demands; and, after a few days' negotiations, agreed to liberate him for the sum of twelve hundred ducats,\* a hundred yards of velveteen for pantaloons, and several dozen of silver buttons and buckles for the same. The difficulty of purchasing these articles, without incurring suspicion, will account for their insertion as part of the ransom. If the reader asks how these treaties are carried into effect, and who the individuals are that act as negotiators, I can only say, that the principal sufferers are anxious

About £200. At *par*, six ducats, Neapolitan, make a pound sterling.



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to conceal the details of transactions forbidden by a law, which humanity and compassion always transgress. It is to be observed, that, except in revenge for treachery and evident breach of faith in the fulfilment of these agreements, the banditti have generally been found true to their word, while few among the unhappy objects of their rapacity have fallen victims to a spirit of wanton ferocity,\* and they are always restored for much less than the sum originally required. It is scarcely necessary to add, that I allude to this, not in extenuation of so abominable a practice, but merely as a custom which they probably adhere to so punctually, for the sake of inspiring greater confidence in their promises."

\* I heard two dreadful stories in the province of Terra d'Otranto. A band of robbers, who had carried off an oil-merchant, for the sake of a ransom, on not receiving it, murdered their helpless prisoner in cold blood, cut his body into pieces, hung up the bleeding head and quarters to different trees in the wood, and then sent to inform his family where they might find their relative.

The same band, on receiving a sum of money considerably less than a ransom they had fixed, said, that was not the price for a *whole man*; nor should a whole man be restored for it. With infernal barbarity they cut off their prisoner's nose, and one of his hands.

## DON CIRO, OR THE PRIEST-ROBBER.

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THIS extraordinary man, whose atrocities far exceed those of his contemporaries (and sometimes his friends) the Vardarelli, was born in the little Neapolitan town of Grottaglie. His parents, who were in easy circumstances, destined him for the ecclesiastical profession, which he entered very young. Having gone through the routine of a priest's education at the seminario and collegio, he was in due course of time ordained by the Bishop of the diocese, and received the mass. The brothers of Don Ciro, most respectable farmers, and his uncle the Canon Patitaro, neither of whom ever took any part in his crimes, were alive and in the enjoyment of unblemished reputation a very few years ago, and are probably still living.

Don Ciro, even at an early period of life, showed very great talents—qualities indeed that might almost claim the high epithet of genius; but un-

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fortunately he possessed also what so frequently accompanies genius, a most ardent and passionate temperament. With a disposition—a resistless impulse to love ever working within him, he was forbidden the indulgence of that most natural and potent of all passions by his sacred profession and his vows. Volumes more extensive than these, devoted to brigands, might be filled with the atrocities and horrors that have resulted from this celibacy of the Catholic clergy; and it happens rather unfortunately that the Catholic religion should be maintained, and this privation insisted upon, in the hot countries of the south more particularly, where men's passions or sexual appetites are infinitely more violent than among the Protestant inhabitants of the more northern parts of Europe. In numerous instances, of course, the rights of nature are asserted at the cost of perjury, and priests contrive to live like other men without exciting open remark or bringing scandal upon the profession. But *Ciro Anicchiarico* was not of an age or in circumstances to have a *nipote in casa*,\*

\* “A niece in the house.” The priests of the mountains and obscure parts of Italy, are often provided with a female who passes as a niece. According to a Roman saying, “The nephews of churchmen are their sons;” but the nieces of these priests are not supposed to be their daughters!

and unfortunately he became enamoured of a lady his own townswoman. This was the key to all his crimes. His passion was too impetuous to be concealed, and his townsfolk talked lightly of him: a young man of the place, a schoolfellow, and once a friend, met with more favour in the eyes of the lady than the priest could hope for. *Ciro* saw evidences of this one day. He rushed out of the house, and providing himself with a gun, lurked behind a wall until his rival should approach. The young man came, but never went from the fatal spot. *Ciro*, who was even then a good marksman, shot him dead, and slunk away fancying to escape discovery. Some rumours, however, were soon raised by the *Motolesi*, the family of the priest's victim. *Ciro's* thirst for vengeance was not satisfied with one murder; he had vowed to exterminate the whole family of the *Motolesi*. Their murmured suspicions perhaps hastened their fate; and one after the other every individual of that house, save one, had disappeared from the little town of *Grottaglie*. (The individual who escaped lived shut up in his house for several years, without ever daring to go out,\* and the unhappy being, even fifteen

\* Strange as it may appear, in these lawless provinces south of Naples, I heard several instances of individuals being thus shut

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years after the murder of his kindred, thought that a snare was laid for him when people came to tell him of the imprisonment, and shortly after, of the death of his remorseless enemy; and it was with great difficulty that he was induced to quit his retreat.)

When he had gratified his revenge, and found that the tardy justice of his country was about to proceed against him, he fled from his native town. Whether he became a brigand then, does not appear; but he shortly after played the part of a hero, for on learning that the Government, ever injudicious and tyrannical, had thrown his innocent brothers into prison, "he flew," he said, "on the wings of fraternal love" to effect their release, and presented himself to the extraordinary judiciary commission of Apulia sitting at Trani. The innocence

up in their houses for many months, either through the fear of secret revenge, or in consequence of some ruffian's open threat. The old Prince —, the father of a brave son who would not have suffered himself to be cooped up for an hour, was positively confined in his baronial mansion at —, in the Monte Gargano, for the best part of a year, by a paltry bravo of the place who had sworn he would shoot him. I never read in the wildest of our romances, incidents so wild, and of recent occurrence, and perfectly well attested, as some I picked up in Apulia and Calabria.

of his brothers was made evident, and they were released, but all the ingenuity and eloquence of the Abbé (for he had attained that sacerdotal grade) could not save himself. Capital punishment, however, was then rare in the Kingdom of Naples, and convicted and manifold murderer as he was, he was only sentenced to the galleys for fifteen years. For four years he was confined in the most horrid dungeons, never being sent to the place appointed for his transportation, though he several times petitioned for that removal, which would have enabled him to breathe fresh air at least for a certain number of hours each day. It would be too horrible to reflect on the workings of a mind like his, in darkness and utter solitude—in a very hell! from which, as might be expected, he came out a fiend indeed!

At the expiration of the fourth year of his dreadful confinement he contrived to escape. But whither could he go without friends or money? The Government of his country had now passed into the hands of the French, who exercised it with more energy than the old Bourbons. But the provinces, as I have already explained, were overrun by desperate men, in whom, for a long time, were confounded the characters of brigands and

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political partisans. The Abate Ciro, therefore, went and joined one of the most notorious of these bands, which soon acknowledged him as their chief, and grew in numbers and prospered under his guidance and fostering talents. Under other circumstances he might have been an excellent soldier—he turned out a most accomplished bandit. Not one of the band could fire his rifle with so sure an aim, or mount his horse like the priest Don Ciro. In the course of his vagabond and hard life, being obliged to hide for seasons in the most horrible holes of the rocks or depths of the forest, and not unfrequently suffering the want of the merest necessities for human sustenance, he acquired a strength of constitution, a resoluteness of purpose, and an adroitness and cunning the most remarkable, even among men whose modes of life, of necessity, confirmed and strengthened the same qualities.

One of his first exploits after escaping from the dungeons of Lecce, was to penetrate with his satellites into one of the first houses of the little town of Martano, where, after having offered violence to the person of its mistress, he murdered her, and all her people, and decamped with a large sum of ready money. This deed was followed up by nu-

merous crimes of the like nature, until what with truth, and a little natural exaggeration, the amount of delinquencies was most fearful, and nothing was heard of but *Ciro Anacchiarico*. This was so much the case; that some years after, when he thought it expedient to send in a justification of his conduct, he said that, "whatever robbery, whatever murder, whatever assassination was committed on the face of the earth, was instantly attributed to the *Abate Anacchiarico*."

The extent of this reputation could not but be dangerous to him—yet he continued, year after year, to elude every pursuit, and to baffle the many hundreds of soldiers that were occasionally sent against him. He was always well mounted. A retreat of thirty or forty miles in a day, was as nothing to him—and even when confidential spies had revealed the place of his concealment but a few hours before, and his pursuers came upon him with the full confidence that they should take him at last, his skill and activity always served him at need, and he escaped. This singular good fortune, or rather talent, of being able to extricate himself from the most imminent dangers, acquired for him, among the people, the valuable reputation of a *ne-cromancer*, upon whom ordinary means of attack



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had no power ; and *Ciro*, becoming aware of this, neglected nothing which could confirm the idea, and increase the sort of spell it produced upon the ignorant, superstitious peasants. The country people, indeed, soon carried their fears so far, that they dared not execrate, or even blame *Don *Ciro** in his absence, so firmly were they persuaded that his demon would immediately inform him of it and render them obnoxious to his bloody revenge.

Meanwhile, a robber by profession—an unholy wizard in the imagination of other men—a devil in reality, *Don *Ciro** never wholly relinquished his sacerdotal character ; on the contrary, he would frequently perform its functions, celebrating the mass and other solemn rites to the *banditti*—who are generally found in Italy to have a strong relish for religion, such as it is, and who will send a knife into your bosom while a crucifix and a reliquary repose upon their own. Further to strengthen the anomaly of his position as a priest, he was accustomed to declare the whole Catholic priesthood rogues without faith ; and he affected himself a very libertine character, addicting himself in a particular manner to the perusal of indecent French songs, a whole collection of which was once found in his portfolio. Moreover, his passion for one woman

generalized itself into an appetite for the whole sex; and besides its accidental gratification, he had, at the period of his power, mistresses in all the towns of the province over which he was constantly ranging, to satisfy it.

The other bands of banditti, compared with this priest-robber's, were angels of mercy. Yet in the course of perpetrating the most ruthless crimes, Don Ciro would sometimes indulge in whims to which he tried to give an air of generosity.

General D'Ottavio, a Corsican in the service of Murat, had long been pursuing him with a thousand men. One day Ciro, whose audacity was frequently quite romantic, armed at all points, surprised the General, unarmed and alone, walking in his own garden. He discovered himself—pronounced his dreaded name, and remarked, that the life of the General, who sought *his* life, was in his hands. “But,” said he, “I will pardon you this time, although I shall cease to be so indulgent if you continue to hunt me about with so much fury!” Thus saying he leaped over the garden wall and disappeared.

When King Ferdinand was restored to his States on the Continental side of the Faro by the great political game of Europe, in which he had been

about as neutral as a marker in whist, he recalled, as I have already mentioned; such as had been *fuorusciti* for political opinions. There were many robbers in this number, but *Ciro Anacchiarico's* crimes were of too deep a die. Yet this bold villain did not fear to present himself to the public authorities at Lecce, claiming his Majesty's amnesty. The Magistrates gave him a safe conduct to the city of Bari, where he was to reside, under the eye of the police, for the present. He pretended afterwards that he felt remorse and repentance at this time, and even entertained a serious idea of shutting himself up in the College of the Missionaries, and passing the rest of his days in fasting and prayers. "I was on the point," said he in his justification, "of following up my noble resolution, when the thunderbolt burst upon my head (*allorchè intesi lo scroscio del violentissimo fulmine, che si scagliava sul mio capo*). Ah! let it be permitted me, most respectable Signors, to exclaim this moment with *Æneas* (*coll' Enea di Virgilio*—the robber had not quite forgotten his classics!)

'Infandum—jubete vos—renovare dolorem!'

"I have not force enough to express to you, how my heart was rent, or the deplorable state which I miserably sank into, when I was secretly informed

by a faithful friend, that my arrest was ordered on the cruel accusation of having infringed the royal mandate. I vanished like lightning from Bari; I went to the capital to obtain redress, and to discover once more the black conspiracy against me. All was vain. The hopes I had cherished disappeared; and while perplexed as to the steps I ought to take, the power of my relentless persecutors prevailed. At last I left the capital, and guided only by that fortitude and constancy so necessary in my misfortunes, I betook myself to my old haunts in the solitude of the forests, and recommenced a savage and wretched life."

This was at the end of 1815: towards the termination of the following year, Don Ciro, having well employed the intervening time, and now taking the alarm at the adoption of vigorous measures by the Government to put down the brigands, conceived the bold idea of uniting all the various bands of robbers and outlaws, of whatever faction or denomination, to oppose the march of the King's troops with all the forces they could muster, and otherwise to assert henceforward one common cause.

The Vardarelli, the most conspicuous of the robbers, were then enjoying the honours of their royal

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capitulation and were in the King's pay; but Ciro knew there were grounds of fear and dissatisfaction existing among them, and hoped to induce them "to turn out" again. He therefore invited them, with the chiefs of other bands, to a personal conference, in order, in the first place, to treat of the measures to be pursued against General Church, who was coming into their provinces at the head of the King's troops: and these worthies had, accordingly, two different interviews, the first at the end of 1816, in a little deserted chapel, where Don Ciro celebrated mass before he began the conference, and the second in the month of March or April 1817, in a farm between S. Eramo and Gioja. Gaetano Vardarelli differed as to the propriety of a junction. He represented that it would be well to act in concert, but still separately, and that they ought by all means to avoid a general insurrection, of which they might easily become the victims. "As long," said he, "as our bands are not numerous, Government will be deceived, and make war upon us feebly, as it does now; but as soon as we form ourselves into a more important body, it will be forced to send an army against us." It appeared, that the Vardarelli, though dissatisfied, were inclined to wait events; and their

advice, or non-adhesion, upset Don Ciro's grand plan.

But still bolder and more comprehensive was the next project of this extraordinary man. Seeing the country overrun by sects and secret societies, which, under the names of Carbonari, &c. aimed at political changes, differing in quality, but all equal in absurdity, and some of which exercised vengeance too horrible and rites too disgusting or ridiculous to mention,—he fancied that, by placing himself at the head of one of these, he could not only gratify his passion for plunder and revenge, but ultimately erect himself into the chief of a wonderful Republic, whose influences were to be felt, not over Naples or Italy alone, but over the whole extent of Europe, whose monarchs, whether constitutional or absolute, were all to sink under the dagger of his votaries. Ciro Anacchiarico does not appear to have created either, but to have united two of these mysterious societies of cut-throats, who had assumed the names, the one of “*I Patrioti Europei*,” (The European Patriots,) the other of “*I Decisi*,” (The Decided or Resolute.) If the affiliation I have heard traced be correct, these sects both rose out of the Carbonari; and the moderate and respectable men—and there

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were many and many thousands such—of that secret society, ought to have paused and shuddered when they saw how easily their conduct might be imitated and perverted, and to what horrors secret societies might be turned. These associations of the “Patriots” and the “Decided” increased rapidly, from the weakness of the Government in neglecting, at first, to punish the guilty, and from the notorious corruption of the inferior Government officers and lower clergy. It was found that priests were attached to all their camps or ramifications. Besides our robber-priest, Don Ciro, whose superior talent and remorseless mode of proceeding soon put him at the head of the whole, the arch-priest Cirino Cicillo, of Cacamola, Vergine, of Coregliano, and Leggeri, filled important situations in the sect. The arch-priest Zurlo, of Valsano, particularly distinguished himself, and in his native town, and on Christmas eve, he renewed a scene of the middle ages,—he celebrated the midnight mass, armed from head to foot !

As soon as these bands (compared to whom the *comitive* of avowed brigands had hitherto been moderate and decorous associations) had acquired some strength, they sent detachments into nearly every town and village in Apulia. Supported by a

larger troop in the neighbourhood, they soon became the despotic masters of solitary or insulated places. A horde of twenty or thirty of these ruffians, who pretended a more peculiar inspiration of republicanism and secret-societyship, overran the country, disguised and masked as punchinellos, committing atrocities, in more ways than one, too unnatural and loathsome to bear repeating.

The most horrid crime perpetrated by the priest Don Ciro was under this disguise of the national buffoon. There was a beautiful woman in a remote village, of whom he had become passionately enamoured (after his fashion), but whom neither his presents, his promises, nor his threats, could seduce. It was carnival time, and on a certain evening, she and her relations and friends were enjoying the pleasures of a dance and a feast. Don Ciro and several of his more desperate adherents, came to the house, disguised as Punchinellos. At that season of madness, every house, where an entertainment is going on, is open, and as all the neighbourhood are masking and mumming, it is of course not easy, nor is it attempted, to distinguish who the thronging guests may be. Don Ciro proved himself an acceptable one by bringing a plentiful supply of excellent wine, in which he and his comrades



pledged the company, and drank *brindisis*, or rhymed toasts, of admirable facetiousness.

They then joined the dance, the disguised priest selecting the happy and unsuspecting object of his passion, for his partner. After numerous tarantellas, which, of all the dances I have seen, are the most calculated to irritate voluptuousness, the party sat down to an abundant supper, the punch-robber-priest still occupying the ear of the beautiful *paesana*, and only detaching his attention from her to make the party drink. As for himself, he merely touched the wine with his lips, and so remained perfectly sober, whilst all the rest of the men were fast approaching intoxication.

At what he considered an opportune moment, he quitted his punchinello squeak, resumed his natural voice, made himself known to the woman, and again pleaded his passion. The poor creature was as averse as ever. He then rose, beckoned to his companions, and wishing the festive party good night, left the house—which, in half an hour, was wrapped in flames. And so well laid were the robber's matches, and so drunk and stupified the reveling peasants, whose wine had been drugged, that they all perished in the conflagration. Don Ciro himself, when in prison, and in the power of Gene-

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ral Church, from which he knew there was no escape, related this atrocious exploit, nor did the near prospect of death induce him to make a single expression of remorse. He dwelt on the beauty of his victim, and his still existing mortification at his not having obtained her love, boasting that he had not often been so disappointed.

In places where open force could not be employed, the most daring disciples were sent in secrecy to watch the moment to execute the sentences of death pronounced in the 'mysterious society. In this manner, the sectary Perone plunged his knife into the bowels of an old man of seventy—the respectable Dell' Aglio, of Francavilla, and afterwards massacred his wife and servant, having introduced himself into their house, under pretence of delivering a letter; and in the same manner, the Justice of Peace of Luogo Rotondo and his wife were assassinated in their own garden.

These bloody sectaries would not suffer neutrality: it was absolutely necessary to join them, or to live exposed to their vengeance, which appeared to be inevitable. The society would pass a secret sentence of death, and proceed at once to its execution, or, if necessary, an individual would take the office upon himself, and wait days and nights,

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until he could strike the blow. The old man of the mountains seemed risen from the grave—the Apulian sectaries were as sanguinary and unerring as his tremendous satellites had been.

They did not invite the support of the rich proprietors and persons of distinction, against whom their hostilities were to be directed; but they unhappily found partisans among the less wealthy; and some few of the inferior gentry, who were jealous of the high nobility, also joined them. These men would probably have blushed at the idea of becoming brigands, yet could there be a more detestable species of brigandage, than what was revealed to them by Don Ciro and his associates? Even allowing that parts of his plan were not divulged to the more respectable of his sectaries, (who, in the long run, must have been the victims of the more villainous,) yet what sympathy can be inspired by the political aspirations of men who could ally themselves with known robbers and murderers, like Anicchiarico and his gang? The Government, instead of summoning the opulent proprietors to its assistance, offended and disgusted them by distrust. A meeting at the fair of Galantina, to deliberate on the means of checking the disorders, was cried down, and treated at Naples as a revolution-

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any proceeding. In extenuation, however, of this seeming imprudence of Government it must be mentioned, that many of these gentlemen or noblemen, resident on their estates in the provinces, were themselves members of secret societies, which had all a political scope; they were not *Patrioti Europei*, or *Decisi*, but they were *Carbonari*:—this I, being in the country, both before and after the events under discussion, know very well—the Neapolitan Government also knew it, and they could hardly draw a line between the sects, the objects of all of which, as already mentioned, were revolutionary, and they feared all the secret societies alike. In the winter of 1816–17, I saw, partly accidentally, and partly through circumstances, which I did not seek, but which it would be dishonourable to disclose, a re-union of these gentlemen. Some were provincial nobility, some noblemen from Naples, who only occasionally resided on their estates, some were substantial farmers. The hour of rendezvous was midnight—the house selected a solitary one, and the members of the club came singly, or in parties of two or three each, on horseback, and without any attendants. This appearance of mystery and night-plotting, though sufficiently romantic, did not captivate me much,

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and young as I was, I could not help feeling that the outward and visible showing of these regenerators or reformers was against them. As one of the uninitiated, I was not admitted to their deliberations ; but I was informed that they all tended to the establishment of a constitutional government in the kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

When the Decisi became so formidable, these gentlemen, however, showed the purity of their intentions, by aiding the Government to their utmost, as soon as more energy was shown, and by co-operating with General Church, with whom many individuals of this class served both as officers and private volunteers.

But at the same time, General Pastore, Commandant of these provinces, and the Marquis Predicattella, Intendant of Lecce, inflamed party spirit by imitating the system of Canosa,\* and setting up

\* The life of this mad partisan and plotter, the Prince of Canosa, would be as amusing as that of any conspirator or brigand-chief. He was the most fanatic of royalists, and fancied he could put down the Carbonari, or ultra-liberals, by means of the society of the Caldarari, or ultra-Bourbonists. Blood and plunder were nothing in his eyes, provided they worked for the King and the Holy Faith. Yet he was a conscientious man, thoroughly convinced of the sacredness of his calling—a poet with considerable satirical power—gentlemanly, and tolerably

private societies to work against private societies : the national guard, under their orders, suffered itself to be partly seduced by the Patrioti and Decisi sectaries, and a number of soldiers and some officers of the Crown battalion of reserve, were similarly corrupted.

The number of these daring sectaries had arrived at its greatest height in the month of December 1817, or of January 1818. At this period they were estimated at 20,000 men ! The mass of them lived at home, in apparent tranquillity, on the produce of their professions ; but they were not the less active in committing unheard-of crimes, as their detection was the more difficult. Persons have been known, when in the power, and under

amiable in private society, and, like the ex-Dey of Algiers, very fond of clocks and watches. Among my reminiscences I can count an evening passed in the same *conversazione* with him, and several meetings with the famous Cardinal Ruffo, who was a very different character, with nothing of the fanatic or madman about him. Indeed, I could almost say of him what Lord Byron did of Ali Pasha, of Joannina, that he was one of the most amiable, gentlemanly old gentlemen I ever met. Cardinal Ruffo was, however, no more an Ali Pasha than a Canosa. This venerable Prince of the Roman Church was very gallant, and much pleased with the society of ladies, whom, moreover, he seemed to possess the art of pleasing.

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the daggers of these ruffians, to sign contracts for the sale of their houses or lands, the objects of the cupidity of these republicans; the contracts were executed in all the forms of the law, and acknowledgements were given by the unfortunate owners for sums which they had never received.

The sittings of these societies were, at first, in the night, like the more respectable re-union I have mentioned, and were carefully guarded by sentinels; their military exercises took place in solitary houses, or suppressed and deserted convents; but taking courage by degrees, they were afterwards seen performing their evolutions by day, and in the open air. Most of them had fire-arms: all had poniards. They also began to organize a corps of cavalry. (On the day appointed for their great revolution, our hero, Don Ciro, had engaged to furnish horses for two hundred armed conspirators of Francavilla, who were to repair on the 27th February, 1818, to a certain place near S. Marzano. It appeared afterwards, that the engagement was kept on neither side, for in the very prison of Francavilla, Ciro and some conspirators of that town, mutually reproached each other with having betrayed the good cause, by neglecting this agreement.)

The patent of this society sufficiently explained its objects. It was an oblong, square paper, or parchment. Two of the angles were ornamented with a skull, over one of which was inscribed "Sadness," and the word "Death" over the other. The opposite angles had cross-bones, with the inscriptions "Terror" and "Mourning." On the top of the patent were the fasces and the cap of liberty, planted upon a death's head, and supported by two axes. At the bottom was a thunderbolt darting from a cloud, and shivering the royal crowns and the papal tiara. Stripes of yellow, red, and blue, the tri-colour of the society, surrounded the patent. The words of the patent were these :

" The Salentine\* Decision.

Health.

Nº. — Grand Masons.

" The Decision of Jupiter the Thunderer hopes to make war against the tyrants of the Universe, &c." (*These words, of which only the initials were given, were written in blood, as were several other parts of the document.*)

\* The Salentine—the ancient, classical name of this district of Italy, was also that destined for their imaginary Republic, which they called " A Link of the European Republic."



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“The mortal —— is a Brother Decided. N°. —, belonging to the Decision of Jupiter the Thunderer, spread over the face of the earth, by his decision, has had the pleasure of belonging to this Salentine Republican Decision. We invite, therefore, all Philanthropic Societies to lend their strong arm to the same, and to assist him in his wants, he having come to the Decision, that he will obtain Liberty or Death. Dated this day, the —— of ——, &c.”

Here followed three signatures written in blood.

1st. Of the Grand Master, with four points after it, which indicated his power of passing sentence of death.\*

2nd. Of the Second Decided.

3rd. Of the Registrar of the Dead, whose functions did not relate to the deceased members of the society, but to the victims they immolated, and of

\* They slaughtered with method and solemnity, or at least, they were enjoined so to do by their institutions. As soon as the sectaries employed on this service, found it convenient to effect their purpose, at the signal of the first blast of a trumpet they unsheathed their daggers; they aimed them at their victim at the second blast; at the third they gradually approached their weapons to his breast; and at the fourth, “with real enthusiasm,” to use their cannibal language, they plunged them into his body! These four blasts were symbolized by the four dots after the

whom they kept a register apart, on the margin of which were found blasphemies and most infernal projects.

The excesses of such a society, directed by such a man or monster, as *Ciro Anicchiarico*, may be easily conceived. But they were now drawing to their close. General Church, armed with the Royal Alter-Ego, or with full and unlimited power, was sent into these distracted provinces, where his energetic and prudent conduct cannot be too much praised. He crossed the river *Ofanto* in the Apulian plain with 1200 men, chiefly of the foreign regiments in the Neapolitan service, formed by himself, (among them were some companies of cavalry.) He could depend upon this force, which was for the greater part composed of Germans, Swiss, Moreotes, and Albanians. The soldiery already in the country were only to be depended upon, after they had witnessed the firm deter-

Grand Master's name. When the *Decisi* wrote to any one, not of the order, to extort contributions, or to command him to do any thing—if these four points were on the paper, it was known that the person they addressed was condemned to death, in case of disobedience. If the points were not inserted, he was threatened with milder punishment, such as laying waste his fields, or burning his house.

mination with which the General set about his duty, and after the factious individuals, contaminated by the sectaries, had been weeded out. The same was the case with the militia.

Encouraged by the example set them by the Dukes of San Cesareo and Monte Jasi, and others of the nobility and wealthy proprietors, several individuals even of the lowest class, furnished information concerning Don Ciro and his sectaries, and joined heart and hand in the measures for their extermination. The fear of not being supported had hitherto prevented these honest men from acting; but still the greater part of the inferior order were shy and silent, maintaining a line of conduct which indicated that they would not hesitate to declare for the sectaries, if the latter should succeed against General Church. This was particularly observed in the neighbourhood of Taranto, at Grottaglie, San Marzano, Martina, and Francavilla, the usual haunts of Don Ciro Anicchiarico and his friends. When General Church first visited these places, the inhabitants looked on in gloomy silence, and no person saluted him; a poor old monk was the only person who bowed to him.

The bandits and the banished (*fuorusciti* and *fuorbanditi*;) were summoned for the last time

before the Royal Commission at Lecce.\* Don

\* The execrable excesses of the secret societies had spread in the neighbourhood of Lecce, which is a large and fine city. A number of respectable young men were invaded by the spirit of mysticism, and suddenly became fanatic and bloody-minded. The madness that prevailed was almost unaccountable. At Gallipoli, the great oil-mart, which is about twenty-five miles from the city of Lecce, several young men, with nearly all of whom I had been acquainted, surprised a townsman in the olive groves near to the beautiful village of the Piscioti, where the Gallipolitans have their country-houses, and murdered him in cold blood, after the fashion of *I Patrioti Europei* and *I Decisi*. Each of them buried a stiletto in the body of the selected victim, whom they left dead and horribly mangled. They repaired by night and burned the body with dry branches and twigs of the olive trees, but they were discovered at their infernal work, and shortly after arrested and brought to trial. They were all very young men—some of them mere striplings. One was the son of an old broker and English interpreter, to whom I had had sundry opportunities of being serviceable, and who in return had frequently sent this very youth to be my guide and companion through the country. I had always found him honest and kind-hearted, very intelligent, and quiet, even to meekness in his manners. A brother of his, who was also a great deal with me, and also, to all appearance, a most amiable young man, did indeed rather alarm me one day when a ruffian of Gallipoli, a galantuomo, and one in power, thought proper to insult me, for he deliberately offered to take upon himself the office of a Callum Beg, and to quiet the bully by a thrust in the dark. But this was an ebullition of gratitude for me!

Ciro sent in his justification, (a most remarkable composition, with considerable eloquence and in-

When his son was in prison, the poor old father, who was then past his eightieth year, wrote to me at Naples to beg, if I had any acquaintance or interest with persons about the Court, to make an application in favour of the youthful murderer. I had not, and should hardly have used it if I had. They were all condemned to the galleys for life, and my former friend was sent to the port of Brindisi, where one of his brothers held a very respectable situation in the customs.

The fire that lies hid in the hearts of these people, under an exterior of indolence and apathy, is astonishing and fearful. As they now are, they may be inflamed for every evil. Were they benefited by education and good government for a few generations, they might become a nation of heroes.

Two young men of this same neighbourhood, rivals for the love of a beautiful girl, resolved to terminate their long disputes by a duel *alla morte*. They took their rapiers, and went out unattended by any seconds, to a ruined and deserted house on the lonely sea-shore. They were missing that night from their homes, nor was anything heard of them until the evening of the second day, when a muleteer, carrying oil to Gallipoli, happened to pass near the deserted house, and to catch the sounds as of some one groaning in his last agony; he went up to the house, and found within one young man covered with blood, and evidently many hours dead; another equally disfigured with blood, and apparently breathing his last. The terrified peasant laid him across one of his mules, but before he got to the town, he was as lifeless as the oil-skins on which he was stretched!

genuity, and more impudence than can enter our conceptions;)\* but knowing his pardon to be hopeless, instead of presenting himself in person, he prepared to defend himself by his sectaries and arms.

General Church then made his military dispositions. He divided his troops into moveable columns, and placed garrisons upon some points where they were absolutely required, either from their commanding the vast plains of the country, or because they were strong enough to serve as places of retreat for the brigands. The moveable columns all operated towards a common centre,

\* He not only pleaded innocent of all the crimes imputed to him, but laid claim to the gratitude of his country, which, he said, *he had cleared of brigands*. "I can say with truth," continues the unblushing villain, "that the roads through the Apennines are now free, the traveller journeys without dread, the farm-houses are re-opened, and the shepherd sings while he leads his peaceful flock to pasture!" "Ah, most gentle Signors, why will you then drive me to desperation, and to crimes which my heart abhors? Why seek the total ruin of a man, of an honest citizen, of a Priest, of a faithful friend to public order? Nothing but calumny, &c." "Spare me for pity's sake! and lend assistance to one whose life is passed in the gloomy forest and the loathsomeness of the cavern."—Justification of the Abbé Ciro Anicchiarico, dated 6th November 1817.

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by gradually contracting the circle which embraced the towns of Grottaglie, San Marzano, and Francavilla. Other columns of reserve accompanied the General, who proceeded, with the rapidity of lightning, wherever the spies had traces of *Ciro Anicchiarico*.

At first, confident in his resources, material and moral, the brigand-priest set a price on the head of our bold countryman, but the General's proceedings soon undeceived him, and he was heard to murmur, while biting his thumb in token of rage and disappointment, "This is a different sort of man from those they have hitherto sent against me! I have fooled many a General—French, Italian, and Neapolitan, but this one will end by making a fool of me!"

He began to perceive that his resources became day by day weaker and weaker; his credit with the people of the country was no longer what it had been; his *prestige* was eclipsed to their eyes, and he had to dread that those who were still faithful to him, would soon fall from his side. If he could, he would then have escaped from the country which had so long trembled at his name. He privately reached the port of Brindisi, where he attempted to embark; but the captain of the

vessel recognized him, and demanded 2000 ducats as the price of his safety ; not having them about him to give, he wrote to his friends, who refused to advance the sum.

Pressed and surrounded more and more closely, pent in the arena, tied to the stake, Don Ciro resolved to risk a general rising of such of his allies as continued desperate, and a pitched battle with the Royal troops. He fixed the 27th of February 1818 for this purpose, and appointed the place of rendezvous under the walls of San Marzano, but his final catastrophe preceded that date !

San Marzano, an Albanian colony, is a miserable little town, containing from 900 to 1000 inhabitants, situated some miles distant from the road between Manduria and Taranto. It is admirably calculated for a defensive position, the rocky hill on which the town is built, and which is planted with olives, is surrounded and intersected by garden walls ; it is quite insulated, and extends from east to west. The view from the terrace of the baronial castle is magnificent. From this spot the town of Oria and the towers of Francavilla are discerned, and in another direction Monte Asole and Grottaglie.

It was from Grottaglie that Ciro Anicchiarico



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set out on the 25th of January 1818, with forty horsemen and ten foot. At two o'clock in the afternoon he fell in with a detachment of General Church's cavalry, commanded by Captain Montorj, who charged him, and drove him as far as Neviera, a farm at the foot of the hill of San Marzano. *Ciro* there made a short stand, and then retreated up to the town itself in tolerably good order.

Captain Montorj followed and attempted to enter by the steep and narrow path which wound up to the town; but *Ciro* and his adherents of San Marzano repulsed him. The officer then turned the hill in order to scale it on the side of Manduria, but there too he was received by a shower of balls. He observed, however, that these were the same men who had repulsed him in the former attempt and had followed his movements, and hence concluded they were not sufficiently numerous to defend all the points at once, and that he should gain his object by deceiving them. Concealing himself behind one of the garden walls, he drew the robbers' attention by firing a carbine or two in that direction, and then he suddenly appeared in the opposite direction followed by most of his men. The stratagem succeeded: Montorj entered San Marzano, and the panic-struck followers of

Ciro dispersed. The great object was to secure  
Ciro; but he was not to be found: he had made  
another (perhaps the hundredth) of his wonderful  
escapes, and was safe in the open country before  
the infantry of a moveable column arrived, which  
it did immediately after his flight from the town.

An instant census was taken of San Marzano,  
the mayor of which suggested to Major Bianchi,  
the commander of the column, a method of dis-  
covering the delinquents. Every house was  
searched, and the guilty were recognized by the  
smell or the blackness of their hands, a proof of  
their having recently handled fire-arms and powder.  
Vito Serio, the brothers Francesco and Angelo Vito  
Lecce, Raffaele Zaccharia, and Pietro Barbuzzì  
were arrested, and all executed on the 3rd of  
February at Francavilla.\* Major Bianchi also took  
the Black Standard, and the insignia and decora-  
tions of Don Ciro, which General Church forwarded  
to Naples, where they were presented to the King  
by Prince Nugent, the Captain-General.

Major Bianchi, following up his advantages, pro-  
ceeded the next day to Francavilla. Here he

\* Their heads were placed in front of the church of San  
Marzano. This church was blown down by a hurricane some  
months after, and the heads were buried beneath its ruins.

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found the inhabitants in the greatest fermentation, determined to break open the prisons and release those confined in them. Having ascertained who were the ringleaders, he lost not a moment in causing them to be seized in their houses. His gens-d'armes patrolled the streets with orders to lay hands on every individual they might meet bearing arms. He thus terrified the towns-people and quelled the tumult.

General Church then arrived in person: the troops concentrated on Francavilla, where a military commission was established to try the outlaws. Don Ciro had now been missing for six or seven days; not a word had been heard of him since his escape from San Marzano, but the General fancying he could not be far off, and that he was still in intimate correspondence with some individuals in that town, threatened it with plunder and destruction, unless its inhabitants enabled him to secure the person of the robber-priest within eight days. Trembling for their houses and property, the militia of San Marzano then undertook to pursue Don Ciro, and on the 6th of February they beset him in the *masseria* (or farm-house) of Sca-serba, not above ten miles from General Church's quarters at Francavilla.

The masserie in Apulia and the provinces of Bari, Otranto, and Taranto, are all built on the same plan, and are very capable of defence. The word is not rendered by "farm-house," which gives but an inadequate idea of the masseria. They date from the period when the incursions of the Turks and Pirates were apprehended, and when the country people shut themselves up in their strongholds with their cattle and most valuable effects, in order to secure themselves from attack. A square wall of enclosure, sufficiently high and solid, generally surrounds the dwelling-house, built against one side, and containing three or four large habitable rooms, and sometimes a small chapel. The vast stables, granaries, and out-houses, within the walls, form a right angle with this dwelling-house, but without touching it. In the midst of the enclosure, at some distance from the surrounding walls, rises a round or square tower of two stories, standing quite alone. The ascent to the upper story is either by stone steps, inserted in the tower, by a drawbridge, or by a ladder easily drawn up into the tower. This description will enable the reader to understand how Don Ciro could make so long a resistance in the masseria of Scaserba.

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He had arrived at this lonely place with some of his comrades worn out with fatigue, and had thought he could venture to repose himself there for a few hours. It was said that he had previously provided Scaserba and many other lonely masserie of the district with arms, ammunition, and some provisions. He was surprised at the sudden and hostile apparition of the militia of San Marzano, but not at all alarmed, making sure he could cut his way through them whenever he chose. Had he rushed out at once, he might have done so. He coolly stayed where he was, and let them form before the gate of the masseria. So strong was his spell on the minds of these men, that for a long time they hesitated to approach within range of his never-erring musket—the first that did so, he shot dead from the outer walls. This delay, however, cost him dear. The militia of San Marzano, though not brave, were this time in earnest, and having sent information to Lieutenant Fonsmorte, stationed at the “Castelli,” a position between Grottaglie and Francavilla, that officer hastened to the spot with forty men of regular troops. As this force came in sight on the edge of the plain, Don Ciro bit his thumb until it bled, for he understood that a vigorous attack was to be made, and retreat was

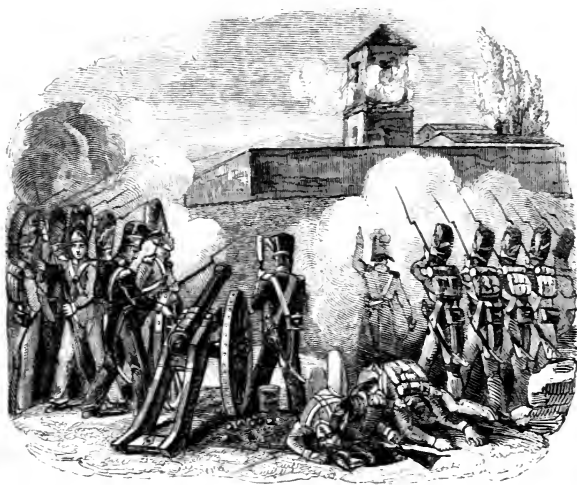
now hopeless. He soon, however, recovered his presence of mind, and locking up the poor people of the masseria in the straw-magazine, and putting the key in his pocket, he retired with his desperate followers to the tower. Having ascended to the upper story, they drew in the ladder after them, and proceeded to load all their guns, of which they had a good number.

It was now evening ; the darkness of night soon succeeded the brief twilight of the south. That night must have been a sleepless one for Don Ciro, though no attempt was made at storming his stronghold. The morning dawn, however, afforded him no comfort, for Captain Corsi had arrived from Francavilla with a detachment of *gens-d'armes*, and soon after Major Bianchi came to the field with other reinforcements !

The siege of Scaserba was now formed by 132 soldiers ; the militia, on whom little dependence was placed, being stationed in the second line, and at some distance.

Don Ciro vigorously defended the outer walls and the approaches to his tower from sun-rise to sun-set. In the night he attempted to escape, but the neighing of horses made him suspect that some cavalry had arrived, whose pursuit it would be im-

Banditti and Robbers.



DON CIRO'S SIEGE.





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possible to elude, and he saw piquets all round the masseria. He therefore retired, after having killed, with a pistol-shot, a voltigeur stationed under the wall he had attempted to scale. He again shut himself up in his tower, and employed himself all night in making cartridges. An afternoon, two nights, and a whole day had been spent, and Don Ciro was still master of the whole enclosure, and the outer walls of the masseria! At day-break, the besiegers tried to burst open the strong wooden gate of the outer wall: Ciro and his men creeping from the tower and under the wall by the gate, repulsed the assailants, killing five and wounding fourteen of the soldiers. A barrel of oil was then rolled to the gate, in order to burn it. The first man who set fire to it was shot through the heart. But its flames communicated to the door, which was soon accessible, and Don Ciro was obliged to retreat to his tower. How long he might have kept Major Bianchi at bay, had not a piece of artillery arrived, and had he not forgotten an important part of provision for a siege, is uncertain; but as the day advanced a four-pounder was brought to the spot, and pointed against the roof of the tower. This little piece produced great effect. The tiles and bricks which fell, drove Don

Ciro from the upper to the lower story of the tower. The assailants, satisfied with the effects produced by the four-pounder, would not approach the tower; he had nothing to do in the way of firing at them, to keep up his spirits;—at the same time, and in this horrid state of inactivity or passiveness, he was tormented with a burning thirst, for he had forgotten to provide himself with water—and he never could drink wine.

At length, after some deliberations with his companions, he demanded to speak with General Church, who he believed was in the neighbourhood; then to the Duke of Monte Jasi—(he seems to have had the ancient Knights' anxiety, to surrender to none save people of distinction; )—but that nobleman being also absent, he condescended to capitulate with Major Bianchi. On their approach, he addressed the besiegers, and threw them some bread. Major Bianchi assured him that he should not be maltreated by the soldiery, of whom he had killed and wounded so many. He then lowered the ladder, descended from the tower, and presented himself to the Major and his troops, with the words "Eccomi, Don Ciro,"—Here am I, Don Ciro!

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His comrades then followed him. And how many were these desperate men, who had so long defended themselves against such a force? They were only three—Vito di Cesare, Giovanni Palmieri, and Michele Cuppoli.

Their hands, their faces, their dress, were horribly begrimed by gunpowder and smoke, but there was no appearance of wounds on their persons, and their countenances, particularly that of their daring leader, were firm and resolute in the extreme. The first thing Don Ciro did after surrendering himself to the soldiers was, to beg them to give him water to quench his consuming thirst. He then delivered the key and desired them to liberate the people of the masseria, who had been locked up all this while in the straw-magazine. He declared that they were innocent, and as they came out of their place of confinement he distributed money among them. He patiently suffered himself to be searched and bound. Some poison was found upon him, which he said he would have taken in the tower had not his companions prevented him.

The besiegers and their captives now marched off for Francavilla. Don Ciro conversed quietly

enough all the way with Major Bianchi, to whom he related the principal circumstances of his most extraordinary life.

In prison he was equally calm. He only appeared to be interested for the fate of some of his partisans, or *Decisi*: he declared that they had been compelled by his threats and their own fears to do whatever they had done, and he intreated that they might not be persecuted.

On being placed before the Council of War, presided by Lieutenant-Colonel Guarini, he addressed a speech to that officer, mistaking him for General Church. Among other strong arguments he used, was this :—

“ On the day that you, General, with the Duke of San Cesareo and only a few horsemen, reconnoitred Grottaglie, I was there, with several of mine, concealed behind a ruined wall, close by the gate where you entered. I covered you with my rifle, and I never missed my aim at ten times that distance ! Had not the feelings of mercy prevailed in my bosom, General, instead of being here to judge me, you would have been in your grave. Think of this, Signor General, and let me meet with the mercy I have shown ! ”

On being informed of his mistake, he insisted on

seeing General Church; when this was refused him, he quietly resigned himself to his fate, drily saying, "Ho capito." (I understand.) He did not pronounce another word.

After sentence of death was passed, a Missionary introduced himself, and offered him the consolations of religion. Don Ciro answered him with a smile, "Lasciate queste chiacchiere; siamo dell'istessa professione; non ci burliamo fra noi!" (Let us leave alone all this stuff and prating! we are of the same trade—don't let us laugh at one another!)

On being asked by Captain Montorj, reporter of the Military Commission which condemned him, how many persons he had killed with his own hand, he carelessly answered, "E chi lo sa? saranno tra sessanta e settanta!" (Who can tell?—they may be between sixty and seventy.)\*

As he was led to execution, he recognized Lieutenant Fonsmorte, the officer who had been the first to arrive at the masseria of Scaserba with his regular troops. Don Ciro had admired his readiness and courage, and said to him, "Se io fosse

\* One of his companions, Occhiolupo, (Wolf-eye,—a fine name for a robber!) confessed to seventeen; the two brothers, Francesco and Vito Serio, to twenty-three; so that these four ruffians alone had assassinated upwards of a hundred!

Re, vi farei Capitano!" (If I were king, I would make you a captain.)

The streets of Francavilla, through which he passed, were filled with people; even the house-tops were crowded with spectators. They all preserved a gloomy silence.

On his arrival at the place of execution, Don Ciro walked with a firm step to his fatal post. He wished to be shot standing—but they ordered him to kneel. He did so, presenting his breast to the soldiers. He was then told that malefactors, like himself, were always shot with their backs to the soldiers; "E tutto uno," (it is all the same) he replied with a smile, and then he turned his back. As he did so, he advised a priest, who persisted in remaining near to him, to withdraw, "for," said he, "these fellows are not all such good shots as I have been—they may hit you!"

He spoke no more—the signal was given—the soldiers fired at the kneeling Priest-robber. Twenty-one balls took effect—four in the head! Yet he still breathed and muttered in his throat; it required a twenty-second shot to put an end to him! This fact was confirmed by all the officers and soldiers present at his execution. The people, who had always attributed supernatural powers to him,

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were confirmed in their belief by this tenaciousness of life, which was, indeed, little short of miraculous. "As soon as we perceived," said one of the soldiers very seriously, "that Don Ciro was enchanted, we loaded his own musket with a silver ball, and this destroyed the spell."\*

Thus fell in 1818, after fifteen years of a most lawless life, dating from his jealousy and first murder, Don Ciro Anicchiarico, of whom little else remains to be said, save that his countenance had nothing at all repulsive about it, but was, on the contrary, rather mild and agreeable; that he was master of a verbose but most persuasive eloquence, though pedantic in his style and over-addicted to classical allusions and inflated phrases—the general defects of his countrymen, the Neapolitans.

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\* This superstition is very general. The Greeks and Turks have it: and in Scotland it is still believed among the people that Viscount Dundee, better known by the name of Graham of Claverhouse, was invulnerable to all ordinary weapons and balls, and that his death, at the battle of Killiecrankie, was owing to the presence of mind of a young officer, who, finding himself within pistol-shot of the charmed man, twisted a silver button off his jacket, with which he loaded his piece, and shot the Viscount through the heart.

The reader who has seen the destruction of their head, may feel some curiosity as to what befel the body of the sanguinary sect the "Decisi."

The day after the death of Don Ciro, ten of the most criminal among them were led through the streets of Francavilla to execution: two or three of them recognised at the windows the fathers, the sons, the widows, or relatives of those they had assassinated by the decision of their horrid secret tribunal, and asked pardon of them. But these were the only men among them who ever expressed the least feeling of repentance. All the others were so hardened and fanatical, that they gloried in, rather than regretted their crimes, and died with a ferocious indifference. Among their number were the Grand Master, the Second Decided, and the Registrar of the Dead—the three dignitaries of the Order.

The military tribunal afterwards brought about two hundred and twenty-seven persons to trial. Nearly half of these, having been guilty of murder and robbery by force of arms, were condemned to capital punishment, and their heads were exposed near the places of their residence, or in the scenes of their crimes.

The death of Don Ciro and his principal accom-



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plices happily put a stop to disturbances, and to that atrocious system which had threatened to take a wider range. In a short time peace was restored to the desolated provinces. General Church used his absolute power with admirable discretion. Even his enemies soon admired, and then loved him. His established principle was, to listen to, or receive no accusations against political opinions, or connexions with secret societies; but he punished crimes and deeds of violence with severity. He caused the accused to be tried without delay; hunted out vagrants; and dismissed from their situations all such government officers as could not be depended upon. Instead of seizing the people's arms without an equivalent, he caused their full value to be paid. He threatened with death such artisans as should dare to manufacture prohibited arms. He exhorted the confessors to endeavour to obtain possession of the poniards, or to oblige the penitents to throw them into deep wells. The city of Lecce, grateful for the blessings of restored tranquillity, voted a statue to the King, and a sword of honour to General Church, with the freedom of the city. And finally, in April 1819, the following consoling circular was issued by the Neapolitan Government.

“The reign of the assassins being at an end, and all the provinces tranquillized, it is resolved, in order to extinguish their memory, that the heads of the malefactors executed in pursuance of the sentences of the military commission, and which are exposed under the church towers, and other parts of the towns, shall be taken down and interred, and that the places where they were exposed shall be entirely cleaned and white-washed. This letter shall be read by the arch-priests in all the churches.”

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This narrative is chiefly taken from a very curious, but, I believe, little known volume on the Carbonari, written by the late Baron Bertholdi, though published anonymously in London. He was at great pains to conceal his authorship; but he is dead, and I can say confidently, on grounds I need not here explain, (though I may hint, that one very sufficient one is, he was the only foreigner who possessed the full knowledge of that mystical society,) that he was the author of the work which was written in French, and done into English by a friend.

The Baron Bertholdi, as a man, was more curious and mysterious than his book. He was Resident of his Prussian Majesty at Rome, where he was

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well known for his knowledge and encouragement of the Fine Arts, and by his mansion, in which he had employed some German students, of high genius, to paint frescoes, that almost rivalled some of the works in the same style of the old Italian masters. He had been a Jew in faith, and continued one in manner and appearance, though he had adopted the Lutheran religion.—This conversion was the subject of a witticism among the Romans, who said there was good hope for him, as he had already changed his quarters in hell—where Jews are somewhat worse off than heretics and schismatics. He was a great deal at Naples, where he courted the society of the English, particularly that of a distinguished diplomatist, of whom the Neapolitans called him the jackal, from his being so continually with him.

He was the most busy, prying little man, I ever knew—indeed, a thorough Political Paul Pry. It was said he knew every thing that was passing ; and well he might, for he always made his appearance in times of trouble and intrigue, and was to be seen everywhere, almost at the same time, and mixing with men of all parties. I once had positively a nervous dread of him, for go where I would, I was sure to see his sinister countenance

and inquisitorial eye. The Neapolitans generally, perhaps from no better proofs than his ill-omened appearance, held him as an arch-enemy to the liberal institutions, which they bungled so sadly; and when, some years after their revolution, they heard of his death, they could scarcely credit the welcome news, for they had set down the Baron Bertholdi as "The Wandering Jew."

I lack the ample knowledge of the mysterious subject, that would enable me to give an opinion as to the entire correctness of his account of the Carbonari society; but I can answer, that the portion of his volume which contains the adventures of *Ciro Anicchiarico*, marvellous as it at times may appear, is perfectly correct, for I was in the country at the time, knew several of the actors in those sanguinary scenes, and heard the stories from their lips. Well might Byron say, "Truth is stranger than fiction!" Where is the writer of romance that would feign such a life as that of this priest-robber?

## ROMAN BANDITTI.

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It has been my object throughout this work to collect my materials, as far as possible, from eye-witnesses of the deeds of the brigands, or persons who were near their haunts and the scenes of their exploits, and derived their information at the immediate source. To no one can I be more indebted than to our own gentle countrywoman, Maria Graham, from whom the following account is taken; nor can I preface the scenes and adventures to which she has given such animation and reality, better than by the words of her own introduction.

“ These notices of the banditti might have been more full and more romantic, but the writer scrupulously rejected all accounts of them upon the truth of which she could not rely, thinking it better to give one authentic fact, than twenty doubtful, though more interesting, tales. The banditti, or fuorusciti of Italy, are what the forest outlaws

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of England were in the days of Robin Hood. They are not of the poorest or vilest of the inhabitants. They generally possess a little field and a house, whither they retire at certain seasons, and only take the field when the hopes of plunder allure them, or the fear of a stronger arm drives them to the woods and rocks. They live under various chiefs, who, while their reign lasts, are absolute; but as they are freely chosen, they are as freely deposed, or sometimes murdered, if they offend their subjects. To be admitted into the ranks of the regular banditti, a severe apprenticeship to all kinds of hardships is required. The address and energy displayed by these men, under a better Government, might conduce to the happiest effects. But here the fire burns not to warm, but to destroy."

The great heat of Rome during the summer of 1819 drove the fair author, her husband, and Mr. Eastlake the distinguished painter, whose admirable pictures of the Italian banditti are so generally known and admired, to seek a cooler retreat in some of the mountains in the neighbourhood of the ancient capital of the world.

"Accident," says the fair author, "determined in favour of the little town of Poli,\* between Tivoli

\* Poli is twenty-six miles to the east of Rome. The road to

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and Palestrina; and as circumstances occurred while we were there of some interest, a sort of journal was kept of everything material. During the last few days of our stay at Poli, the interest we had taken in the country-people about us, was superseded by one to which a considerable degree of danger was joined. The banditti who had long infested the road between Rome and Naples, having been driven from their towns of Sonino, Frusnone,\* and Ferentino, partly by the Pope's edict, and partly by the march of a body of two thousand of his Holiness's troops against them, had fled up the country and taken refuge in the wilds which border that great valley of the Apennines, formed by the course of the Anio, and separating the Marsian hills from those on whose edge Tivoli and Palestrina are situated. The highest point of this last ridge is the rock of Guadagnola, two hours' walk from Poli. There one company of the ban-

it from the Porta Maggiore follows the ancient Sabine or Prenestine way across the Campagna, till it becomes impassable.

\* All these are ancient places that witnessed, instead of the deeds of robbers, the heroic achievements of Coriolanus! Sonino was the ancient Sumnino; Frusinone, Frusino; Ferentino, Ferentinum, (at which place are some of the finest specimens of the walls, called by some writers Cyclopian.) All three were towns of the Volsci.

ditti stationed itself, and thence made excursions to our very gates.

“ The number of the inhabitants of Poli does not exceed one thousand three hundred; they are a very quiet simple people. The town stands on a narrow ridge of dark rock, between two mountain rivulets. The stone it is built of is so like the rock, that it looks as if it had grown out of it; and embosomed in thick woods, and overtopped by mountains, it shows like a mountain-eagle’s nest as one approaches it. It was a place of great consequence when the Conti, Dukes of Poli, had under their dominion upwards of forty townships, and boasted of the Cardinals, the Princes, and the Popes of their house! Their importance in the civil wars of Italy has given them a place in each of the three divisions of the *Divina Commedia* of Dante: but the title of the Dukes of Poli is extinct, and their large possessions have devolved to other noble families.”

The scenery around Poli, which is very accurately and strikingly described by our fair countrywoman, is of the most picturesque or romantic character, and no reader can well follow her, in her delightful excursions, through the wild wood, or the lonely valley, or to the mountain’s top, where,



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as the sun is setting over the wide campagna, she pauses to read from Schiller the "Robber Moor's Soliloquy," without wishing to be with her, though real and dreadful banditti were always close at hand.

"We had heard," writes she, a few days after her arrival, "from some peasants bringing their corn to be ground at the mills near Poli, that the robberies lately committed on the road between Rome and Naples, had determined Government to raze to the ground the town of Sonino, which had opened its gates to the banditti, and had, in fact, long been their head-quarters. Indeed, the first report was, that the town had actually been battered down, and all the inhabitants put to death in the night. The peasants who gave this evidently exaggerated account, were of opinion that the men must certainly have been absent from the town, or they would never have suffered it to be so surprised; and, in that case, they foretold the most dreadful consequences to whomever should fall into their hands, by way of reprisal for the murder of their wives and children. At any rate, whether Sonino were destroyed or not, whither the brigands, who would certainly leave the towns as soon as they heard the severe proclamation issued

against them, would direct their steps, was matter of serious and anxious conjecture. Two years ago, on a similar occasion, the noted Di Cesaris,\* who

\* This band was dressed in the same style, but in better condition than the one that kept our countrywoman a prisoner. Di Cesaris was a civilized fellow, always carrying with him pens, ink, and paper; and besides the Madonna, he had a crystal hung to his neck, with which "he took the light out of men's eyes," and thus easily overcame them. It was curious to find this humble copy of Ariosto's enchanted mirror among the mountain shepherds! But like all uncivilized people, they believe in enchantments, and most of them regarded the robber Di Cesaris as no mean wizard. In fact, he and many of his followers were men of some education. While their grosser fellows were gambling and dancing, these would amuse themselves with books; one of them read aloud from some old romance in rhyme, the others sitting round with animated attention.

An English gentleman, Mr. Charles Kelsall, who was travelling in the country at the time Di Cesaris was the most dreaded of all the banditti, gives this account of him, and of a detestable proceeding of the soldiers of the Pope.

"There was one Di Cesaris, an aboriginal compound of bigotry, activity, and cruelty; the Cæsar Borgia of the Apennines. At the head of a troop of banditti as fearless as himself, he had spread terror to the gates of Rome, and had insulted, perhaps intimidated the authorities, by demanding a considerable ransom for an individual of note, whose person he had secured. The Papal troops had been despatched in quest of him, and a few days before we left Rome, they had found his wife and

was shot in the spring of 1818 near Terracina, led his followers up to these hills, and for nearly two

family at the village of Saint Prassedi, whom, by a summary legal process, they had murdered in cold blood! Di Cesaris in consequence was wandering in the heart of the Apennines, rabid as a wounded lion, and breathing slaughter and revenge."

—Classical Excursion from Rome to Arpino. Published at Geneva in 1820. A quaint, pedantic, very odd volume, that contains, however, some things worth looking at, particularly a description of the island of Capri, and an amusing plan to raise £30,000 by having subscription-books opened in the houses of the principal bankers in Europe, for the purpose of raising a monument at Arpinum (the orator's birth-place,) to Cicero—of which said monument he (Mr. Kelsall) was to be the architect, &c.

I cannot resist the temptation of making my reader laugh with a specimen of this classical tourist's whimsical pedantry. He is talking of how he shall get back to Rome without falling among thieves or getting a fever. "These circumstances suggested a *Divinatio* on the most advisable way of returning, and escaping the tusks of that *Verres* of the Apennines, Di Cesaris. Sometimes we thought of passing by the *Reatine Tempe*. Further delay was dangerous; and it was high time to withdraw *De Finibus Arpinatium*, the *Topica* of which were so doubtful and uncleared; for since *Di Cesaris*, like his great prototype, set the *De Legibus* at defiance, and consequently the *De Officiis*, an attack in the woods was by no means a *Paradoxon*. The fatigue and heat too made it necessary to take measures *De ægritudine leniendâ*, which, if postponed, might have terminated in the *De morte contemnendâ*."—p. 119-20.

months they subsisted on the spoil of the neighbouring townships. On such expeditions the banditti are always aided by the shepherds and goat-herds, a race of men apt for their purposes, as their half-savage life, while it gives them enough intercourse with the towns to procure food and intelligence, detaches them so much from all social bonds as to render them indifferent to the crimes of others. The observation that the pastoral manners, which have been "adorned with the fairest attributes of peace and innocence, are much better adapted to the fierce and cruel habits of a military life,"\* is confirmed by the manners of the shepherds of these mountains. Where the townships have land enough to employ the inhabitants in agriculture and gardening, as at Poli, the inhabitants are kind and gentle; and when a robbery or outrage is committed, the first exclamation always is, he who has done the evil must be an idle fellow, who had not patience to wait while his bread was growing. But Capranica and some other mountain towns which have no arable land annexed to them, while they supply their neighbours with shepherds, also furnish their annual quota to the ranks of the banditti."

\* Gibbon, Dec. and Fall, Chap. xxvi.

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A band of gipsies, pedlars, rogues, and fortune-tellers, as with us, suddenly made their appearance one afternoon at Poli. They seemed to be the forerunners of the brigands, who had been talked of during several days, for the next morning at dawn the gipsies disappeared, and it was ascertained to a certainty that a troop of banditti were at Guadagnola, a mountain peak,\* about two hours walk above Poli.

“Early the day before, which was the 12th of August 1819, these robbers had seized two lads, assistants to a surveyor. They were employed measuring in the wood leading to Guadagnola, when two men, armed, came suddenly up to them near the little chapel to the Madonna, and seized the youngest boy, who was going along the road; the other was a few paces within the wood. The

\* “This rock is like a hollow nest, within which the houses are entirely concealed; they are built so close to each other as barely to allow an ass or a mule to pass along even the principal street. There are about fifty houses, and a small church, built of such materials as the mountain affords, chiefly covered with shingle, on the top of which great stones are laid to prevent the winds from carrying away the roofs. There are about two hundred and fifty inhabitants, whose chief riches consist in their pigs and poultry, and most of whom seek their summer employment in the unwholesome fields of the Campagna.”

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robbers called to him by the opprobrious name 'razza di cane,' and presenting their muskets, forced him to come to them; when giving him a blow, they forced him and his companion before them to an open space in the wood, where they found eleven of their companions sitting on the grass, engaged in different occupations; the two who had taken the lads being sentinels, posted to give notice of any approaching danger. Their chief object in seizing the boys appeared to be that of obtaining information as to the principal inhabitants of Poli, and their places of daily resort, in order to capture some of them if possible, and thereby obtain a good sum as ransom. But they had another reason for taking them, and detaining them the whole day; and this was to prevent their giving such information concerning them and their situation in the neighbouring towns, as might enable the townspeople, or the military, to surround them. They, therefore, kept them prisoners till night; treated them very well, and gave them bread and cheese, with some water, which was all they had for themselves, though the lads understood that they expected a provision of meat and some wine at night.

“ During the time of their captivity, the lads

had full leisure to observe the dresses and the employments of the banditti: the latter were chiefly gaming. As soon as two sentinels were placed, which were frequently changed, the party divided into different sets, one of which played at cards; another at morra,\* for a louis-d'or per chance; a third party danced, while a fourth listened to a story, or ballad, in all the careless profligacy of an outlaw's life. Their dress was picturesque, yet military; that of some of them was a good deal tattered, but all had blue velvetten short jackets

\* This is a game very prevalent among the lower classes in the South of Italy, particularly at Naples, where, on a feast-day, the ear is constantly assailed with the mingling sounds of "five, seven," &c. pronounced with wonderful rapidity and loudness. The game is thus played. Two men stand close to each other—each keeps his right hand clenched, and they throw these right hands out, opening a certain number of the fingers. The players both cry out together, and he who guesses the right number of fingers thrown out by himself and antagonist, marks a point. The motion of the hands is astonishingly quick, and the number must be pronounced as they are extended. Mrs. G—— says the game is not unlike one which children play in England, "Buck, buck, how many horns do I hold up?" I never saw this English play, but I am inclined to believe with Mr. Blount that the *morra* of the modern Italians is the same as the *micare digitis* of the ancient Romans.

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and breeches, linen shirts, drawers, and stockings; the latter bound round with leathern thongs, which fastened on a kind of sandal; their shirts open at the neck, with the collar turned back. The waist-coat was fastened with bunches of the little silver filigree buttons common at Naples; two rows of the same buttons adorned the jacket, which was cut in the military style, and had several pockets on each side. Many of them had two coloured silk handkerchiefs fastened to their button-holes by one corner, the rest being tucked into the pockets. Round the waist they wore an ammunition belt, called here a *padroncina*, (or the young mistress,) made of stout leather, having slips for cartridges, and fastened in front with a silver or plated clasp. Across the left shoulder another leathern belt was slung, in which there was a case for a knife, a fork, and a spoon, some of which, the boys said, were of silver. There was besides a hanger, or *couteau de chasse*, the weapon with which most murders in this part of the country are committed, with a brass handle, ornamented with silver, or plated.

“ Every robber had a silver heart, containing a picture of the Madonna and child, suspended by a red ribbon to his neck, and fastened with another



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of the same colour to his left side. Their hats had high pointed crowns, like those of Salvator Rosa's banditti, surrounded with bands of alternate red and white near the top, and a black band and buckle near the brim. He, whom the lads took for the chief, though we learned afterwards that he was not so, was distinguished by a quantity of gold lace on his jacket and pantaloons; this we concluded to be the spoil of some Neapolitan officer. They all wore large gold ear-rings with drops; and two of the youngest had each two long ringlets on each side of the face, the rest of the hair being short. Many of them had gold watches, seals, chains, rings, and other trinkets, which they boasted of having taken from English travellers.

“The boys described the robbers as being stout, active, young men, excepting one, who was very short and corpulent, with a bald head; he appeared to be the butt of the rest, and, like Falstaff, to be not only witty himself, but the cause of wit in others; they called him the gourd-merchant, alluding to the gourdlike smoothness of his bald head. After asking about the different inhabitants of Poli by name, the brigands began to question their prisoners about the THREE English who were there;

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whether they did not go out into the woods to paint, and other questions of the kind. The boys being really ignorant, could give them no information about us, and very little about any one else; and therefore they were dismissed at night-fall, and made the best of their way home, where they were the first to give notice of the vicinity of the brigands, although several shepherds had seen them, and had even made purchases of bread and other provisions for them. The gonfaloniere, for there is still the *name* of that magistrate at Poli, then sent to Palestrina for the marshal of the district, who alone can order out the civic guard, *i. e.* about twenty of the young peasants, into whose hands muskets are put for the occasion, and while employed, they receive each 25 bajocchi, or about a shilling English, a-day: their duty is to watch their own town by day and night, and to join the *civica* of other towns, or the regular military, in pursuit of outlaws and robbers."

When their secrecy was no longer of use to the robbers, or dangerous to the inhabitants, the shepherds confessed that they the banditti had visited their sheep-cots, near Capranica, on the evening of the 9th of August. "Only the day after we had been on the very same rock," says our author,

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“ to see the sun set from it ; and as we listened to the distant sound of a bagpipe among the hills, a young lad who was with us, said, ‘ That is most likely a shepherd from the Abruzzi, or some of those wild Neapolitan places that harbour the out-laws.’ The brigands ate two of the shepherds’ sheep, merely skinning them, and roasting them whole, and honoured them with their company for two nights. They sent one of them to Poli for bread, keeping his companions as hostages, and threatening all the shepherds with death, if they revealed having seen them within eight days. These threats, which are usual from the brigands, and the facility of executing them on the poor shepherds, always in the open country and solitary places, would sufficiently account for the silence or collusion of the latter.

“ With their hosts, the bandits talked very freely, treating of their own private histories and modes of life. They showed them the silver heart and picture of the Madonna, which each had suspended from his neck, saying, ‘ We know that we are likely to die a violent death ; but in our hour of need we have these,’ touching their muskets, ‘ to struggle for our lives with, and this,’ kissing the image of the Virgin, ‘ to make our death easy.’

This mixture of ferocity and superstition is one of the most terrific features in the character of the banditti of Italy.

“ There was among this troop, which now so immediately interested us, shut up, as we were, at Poli,” says Mrs. Graham, “ one man from the neighbourhood, a shepherd, whose master had treated him rather cruelly, and who now said that he thought it high time to call upon his master, and thank him for his courtesy. This observation being carried to the master, he was, of course, careful not to go out of the town-gates alone, unarmed, or on foot. However, the brigands made him pay for his safety, or that of his flocks, which were exposed in the country; for they sent him an order to provide a number of velvet suits, linen shirts, and drawers, and stout great coats, and to deposit them at a certain spot, by a given time, on pain of losing his flocks on the hills. The proprietor sent a messenger to Rome to inquire of the Government, whether his property would be protected or guaranteed to him, if he refused to supply the robbers, or whether he should supply the robbers with the clothing required. The answer was such as to induce him to provide the articles demanded by the appointed day.

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“ The Mareschal having arrived from Palestrina, in consequence of the message of the Gonfaloniere of Poli, the civic guard was at last called out, and a singular scene presented itself, as we looked from our windows. The Mareschal, with a single horse-pistol stuck in his belt, was walking up and down, in consultation with the principal inhabitants of the place ; for there was a pretty general expectation that the brigands would collect in greater numbers, and attempt to enter Poli that night. By-and-by, twelve or fourteen young men joined them, armed with muskets and fowling-pieces, of various construction ; these formed the civic guard. Some of the guns were their own, others belonged to Government, and were lent for the occasion. About ten o'clock, the party went to a little platform just without the principal gate, which usually serves as a play-ground for children, to fire at a mark, and try their powder, regardless of the spot being exactly within sight of the enemy's camp. At length they set out in pursuit of the brigands ; but, as we afterwards learned, with little hope or intention of doing more than driving them from their immediate haunt in the neighbourhood, and perhaps alarming them ; for many had gone out without powder and shot, and few with more than

a second charge. Shortly after their departure, a party of nearly two hundred men, who had been out to collect and drive in the cattle from the hill, entered the town, with such shouts of joy and triumph that we thought that some detachment of the brigands had been met with and routed; but we soon discovered the very unusual sight of a herd of fat oxen, with cows and fine calves, or rather heifers, running down the street, followed by their drivers, and accompanied by all the women and children of the town. Towards night a lieutenant, with a very small party of his Holiness' soldiers, entered the town, in consequence of a message sent to Tivoli the night before; they were intended to assist the town-guard, and created an unusual degree of bustle. The lodging and victualling them did not seem to be a matter very easily adjusted, nor indeed very agreeable. Their gay dresses and trained step formed no small contrast with the rustic air and coarse clothing of our old friends; and the superiority they assumed, seemed by no means pleasing to the Polesi. At length the lanterns, which had been moving up and down the street at least two hours later than they had ever done before, dropped off one by one,

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the expected attack on the town was forgotten, and the night passed quietly as usual.

“ Early the next morning, another party of the townsmen, accompanied by most of the soldiers, set out in search of the brigands, and in the afternoon the party of the day before returned. They had found the lair of the robbers yet warm ; the grass was trodden down ; fragments of bread and other food, mingled with remnants of clothing, torn and cut packs of cards, and broken ornaments, lay strewed about the ground. The skin of a sheep was hanging on a tree ; and every thing bore the marks of a very hasty removal. The guard found a shepherd, with some dressed meat, and employed in making sandals of a kid’s skin ; this they taxed him with having killed for the brigands ; but he asserted that he had taken it from the mouth of a wolf who had been at the flock the night before.

“ The direction taken by the banditti, on the two following days, was by no means certain, and we began to hope that they had left the neighbourhood. But on the morning after, some women having reported that they heard a whistling in a deep glen, within a mile of the town, on the road towards Palestrina, the civic guard was ordered out

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in pursuit, and one of our party determined to accompany it. A soldier and a spy headed the little troop. As soon as they got out of the town, and reached the wood, the soldier directed them to march in Indian file. Though the result of this third expedition was as unsuccessful as that of the two others, the danger, or at least the apprehension of it, was sufficient to show the temper of the people. As they approached the suspected spot, strict silence was kept. A woman, who acted as guide, at length stopped, and the party began to descend into a deep defile, with the utmost caution, and great difficulty. It was a romantic spot, the bed of a river, at this season almost dry; and one of the men, as he looked fearfully round, whispered, 'This is, indeed, a place for banditti.' In the absence of the robbers themselves, the peasants climbing among the loose stones at the bottom, made a picturesque addition to the natural wildness of the scene. Here some of the people were observed to lag, to the great distress of the foremost, who exclaimed, 'Per Dio quelli ci lasciano,' (By heaven those fellows are leaving us!) The sides of the ravine, where not rocky, are clothed with large chestnut trees and brushwood, so that the danger of the situation, supposing the brigands to be con-



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cealed among the trees, reduced the soldier to look for a convenient place to ascend. There was a steep, narrow, sloping field planted with maize, with chestnut-trees on each side: the troop climbed up to it in silence, and the soldier directed the men to lower their muskets, that they might not be seen over the top of the brushwood. The spy, who was foremost, advanced towards the trees, half raised his musket, and then stepped back to the soldier, and whispered, which made the people believe they had found the robbers; and one of them said, 'Per Cristo, eccoli qui!' (Here they are,) and hesitated.

"The wood was entered, but nothing found there; and the rest of the march was only a repetition of the same cautious walk. The spy, who had left the company to examine a narrow path, was nearly shot by one of the men, who heard a rustling among the leaves. A smoke at a distance, which at first gave some alarm, turned out to be nothing but some chaff which a peasant was burning. At length they arrived at the top of the hill, between Poli and Capranica, a station where they resolved to wait for another division of the townsmen, which had gone round by a different road. At length they appeared, but neither party liked

to approach the other, till a certain red jacket was recognized, when they joined, and returned the shortest way home. While the first party had waited under the trees for the other, sentinels had been posted all round, at a hundred yards' distance. The rest amused themselves by climbing for squirrels' nests, and telling stories of one another, from which it appeared that more than one of them had escaped from prison for attempts at assassination. One in particular, who seemed a kind of harlequin among them, had had more than one hair-breadth 'scape when the sbirri were in pursuit of him. On one occasion he had escaped by leaping from a high window; and to prove that he had lost none of his agility, he diverted himself with climbing to the extremities of the high chestnut boughs, and dropping off them to the ground.

“Shortly after the return of the guard, we found that the banditti had really been in an opposite direction, on the heights of San Gregorio, whence they had taken a quantity of bread and wine. We therefore went out, and took a short walk without the gates. The near fields were more than usually peopled; for several small flocks and a few heads of cattle had been driven in from the hills, that they might go into the town at night for pro-

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tection. We observed that the boy who went daily to cut wood for the baker had muffled the bell that hung round his ass's neck, in order to prevent the noise from betraying his master. The farmers who had occasion to go to the threshing-floors, all went well-mounted, and with an attendant or two. On going home, we learned that a surgeon, and two or three other persons, had been seized by the brigands, and carried to the mountains, in order to obtain a ransom. They were inhabitants of Castel-Madama, a small town near Tivoli, and so named from Margaret of Austria, daughter of Charles V. This news necessarily increased the consternation of the householders of Poli, who now resolved to make every effort to assemble and arm the young men of the town. At night a small detachment of Polesi, which had been sent to join the people of Casapa in an attempt to drive the banditti from San Gregorio, where the tocsin had been sounded on the capture of the people from Castel-Madama, returned. They were sent back without attempting to do anything, as it was feared that any open measures against the robbers, before the ransom was paid, would endanger the lives of the prisoners."

On the 18th of August, the day of Saint Agapet,

when there was a church festival and a fair at the neighbouring town of Palestrina, about two hundred and fifty persons ventured out from Poli to go to them. "One party preceded the other about half an hour, and both set off before day-break. As the sun rose, the rear party were so alarmed that they began to think of returning home, seeing a number of persons through the trees, whom they at first took for robbers, but the sight of the women's white head-clothes satisfied them that they were townsfolk, and the two parties joined, and met with nothing farther to startle them on the road. Shortly after they left Poli, it was known that all the *poor* prisoners had been dismissed by the banditti; but those from whom they could hope to extort a ransom were detained. About noon a report reached us that one of the captives had been barbarously murdered; and towards night, as it had been ascertained at Tivoli that the surgeon, the only remaining prisoner, was safe, an order came to Poli for all the force it was possible to assemble to keep the pass of Guadagnola towards Poli, as every other avenue by which the brigands could escape was supposed to be already sufficiently guarded. This order arrived about sun-set. Most of the men were absent at Palestrina, so that

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the boys and old people were collected in the street to choose out of. Their wives, mothers, and grandmothers, came out, each with her lantern, to beg that her husband or child might be left to guard her house, in case the robbers, taking advantage of the absence of the strong men, should attack the town. The families who possessed arms refused to lend them to the guard, and as it appeared that the night was likely to be wasted in altercations, the magistrates and the officer, who still remained in the town, resolved to enter the houses forcibly, and take what arms they could find. Two or three houses were accordingly entered, but it consumed the time equally, and the guns were so well concealed, that there was little chance of obtaining enough to arm the few men they could provide; therefore they resolved to wait till the morning, when the men would be returned from Palestrina. The scene in the streets, where all public business is transacted, was not only quite new to us, but curious in itself. The armed and the unarmed, the willing and the unwilling, were all vociferating at once: the women were going about with their infants in one hand and a lantern in the other; now aggravating, now quieting the disputants. The people from the feast at

Palestrina came gradually dropping in, laden with their nuts or other fairings, and mostly half intoxicated, all mingling together, and talking of danger from banditti to be apprehended that night, or to be provided against next day, without ever considering that, while they were disputing, the ruffians would escape in any direction they chose. Such was the evening of the eighteenth. The morning of the nineteenth was not much more orderly. The men, indeed, sober, and in earnest, for this time, had armed themselves well, and were leaving the town in greater numbers than we had yet seen assembled. Their wives and children, believing there was now some real danger, were sitting lamenting in groups about the street; but they might have spared themselves the pain. The great mountain pass had been left unguarded for more than twelve hours. Half that time would have sufficed the brigands, with their active habits, to have escaped to a distance far out of the reach of pursuit."

Tired with being pent up, and of seeing a town with twelve hundred inhabitants kept in continual alarm, our courageous countrywoman and her two companions, with an escort, left Poli, on the 21st of August, for Tivoli. On her road she passed the

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Emperor Hadrian's villa, among whose ruins the robbers had passed the night, and then lay concealed. They must have seen her and her party pass, but as the number of their muskets were inferior, they did not risk an attack. She arrived safely at Tivoli, which she found in a state of still greater consternation than the little town she had left. Her escort joined immediately the people of Tivoli in pursuit of the outlaws, who were seen crossing the hills behind the town.

“Every day while we remained at Tivoli brought some new particulars concerning the march of the banditti. It was ascertained that their entire number amounted to about one hundred and forty, divided into companies not exceeding twenty in each, for the sake of more easy subsistence. The head-quarters appeared to be at Rio Freddo, and in the woods of Subiaco. Their spies, and those who bought provisions for them, were lavishly paid, and the instances of any information being given against them were very rare. On one occasion, however, they had seized a ploughman belonging to Rio Freddo, and, after beating him, they had sent him to his house to fetch a few dollars, as the price of his future security while at work. On his way the plough-

man met the robber-hunters belonging to Subiaco, and gave them notice of the situation of the robbers. They desired him to fetch his money, and go to the appointed place with it, and if he found them still there, to leave a mark at a particular tree. Meantime they took measures for surrounding the robbers' lair, and having done so, waited patiently till the poor man had paid his money, and made the mark agreed on; and this they were more careful to do, as, had the brigands suspected he had given information, they would certainly have put him to death. As soon as they knew him to be safe, the hunters drew close round the enemy, who were seven in number, and fired: two were killed on the spot, and the five others, of whom one was found dead of his wounds near the place next day, left their fire-arms, and concealed themselves in the thicket of Arcinuzzo, between Rio Freddo and Subiaco."

"Every evening the episcopal church-bell rang at Tivoli, to set the guards at the different bridges leading to the town, as the people were in nightly expectation that the brigands would enter it in search of provisions, with which the shepherds had become rather shy of supplying them, since two or three of them had been taken up and imprisoned



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for so doing. On the night of the 21st or 22nd seven robbers had gone to San Vetturino, armed chiefly with bludgeons, and had taken nearly all the bread in the town, but had not carried off any of the inhabitants, who, in fact, are not rich enough to afford much ransom. But the most intrepid gang lingered about Tivoli, where there are a number of rich proprietors, who might have furnished a considerable booty.”\*

“ The body of a murdered man was found at the gate of San Gregorio, with twenty wounds, inflicted with knives. The brigands, emboldened by success, seemed determined to press closer round

\* “ After we returned to Rome, we learned, that the same gang had seized the arch-priest of Vicovaro, whose nephew, having offered some resistance, was killed on the spot. The ransom demanded for the priest and a friend was so exorbitant that it could not be raised, on which the ruffians sent their ears to their families, and afterwards some of their fingers. At length, tired of waiting, and perhaps irritated by the complaints of the two prisoners, they murdered them ! There is a sort of ferocious jollity among these brigands more shocking, perhaps, than their actual cruelty. They had stripped the priest of his robes and clerical hat two or three days before they killed him ; one of their number put on the sacerdotal clothing, and substituted for it his own, with his high-crowned hat, which they forced the poor priest to wear.”

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all the hill-towns. None of the principal inhabitants ventured without the walls, and even the work-people were robbed of their ornaments and their little savings." Such being the dreadful state of this part of the country, the spirited author and her friends abbreviated their villegiatura, and leaving the lovely scenery of Tivoli—its cascade and grottoes, its woods and rocks, its villas and graceful ancient temples, returned to Rome early in September.

During her short stay at Tivoli she became acquainted with Signor Cherubini, the surgeon of Castel-Madama, of whose captivity among the robbers she had heard so much at Poli. He was a man of undoubted veracity, and bore a high character, not only as an able surgeon but a good man. He related to her every particular of his capture and liberation, allowing her to write them down; and she was afterwards so fortunate as to procure a circumstantial account written by himself to a friend, which abounds with interest, and striking traits of character.

Signor Cherubino was summoned early in the morning of the 17th of August to Tivoli, to attend a sick nun and a gentleman of that place, by a factor well known to him, and named Bartolomeo

Marasca. They set off on horseback together, the factor being armed with a gun.

“We had scarcely passed the second arch of the ancient aqueducts,” writes the poor surgeon, “when two armed men suddenly rushed out from the thicket and stopped the way, and pointing their long guns at the factor, who was riding a little before me, ordered him to dismount. Meantime two others came out of the wood behind me, so as to have us between them and the former two. Both the factor and myself had dismounted at the first intimation. The two men behind me ordered me to turn back instantly, and to walk before them, not by the road to Castel Madama, but that to San Gregorio. The first question the robbers asked me, was, whether I was the Prince of Castel Madama, meaning, I fancy, the Vice-Prince who had passed the road a little before me. To this I answered, that I was not the Prince, but a poor surgeon of Castel Madama; and to convince them that I spoke truth, I showed them my case of lancets, and my bag of surgical instruments; but it was of no use. During our walk towards San Gregorio, I perceived that the number of brigands increased to thirteen. One took my watch from me, another my case of lancets. At the beginning of

our march, we met, at short distances, four youths belonging to San Gregorio, and one elderly man, all of whom were obliged to share my captivity : shortly after we met another man, and an old woman, whose ear-rings were taken, and they were then permitted to continue their journey. In the meadows by the last ruined aqueduct, the horses which the factor Marasca and I had ridden, were turned loose, and after passing a ravine, we began to climb the steepest part of the mountain with such speed, that, together with the alarm I felt, made me pant so violently, that I trembled every moment lest I should burst a blood-vessel. At length, however, we reached the top of the mountain, where we were allowed to rest, and we sat down on the grass. Marasca then talked a good deal with the brigands ; showed himself well acquainted with their numbers, and said other things, which my wretched state of mind prevented me from attending to very distinctly ; but seeing him apparently so intimate with the robbers, a suspicion crossed me that I was betrayed by him."

The chief brigand turned to the poor surgeon, and throwing him his lancet case, said he would think about his ransom. The surgeon represented his poverty with tears, but his ransom was fixed as

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high as two thousand dollars ; and pen, ink, and paper being produced, he was obliged to write for that sum, which he did, with all the earnestness that the presence of thirteen assassins, and the fear of death, could inspire. The thing was now to procure a messenger to carry this letter. This was soon done. A man was ploughing on the side of the hill lower down, and another, belonging to Castel Madama, was seen in the flat below. They were both secured by the robbers, and dispatched with the surgeon's letter to Tivoli.

The brigands stayed where they were for three hours, when the apparition of an armed force in the country below induced them to decamp. They retired towards the most woody part of a still higher mountain. "After a long and most painful march, finding himself in a place of safety, the brigand chief halted, there to await the return of the messenger ; but as that return was still delayed, the chief came up to me angrily, and said, that it might happen to me as it did to a certain inhabitant of Veletri, who had been taken by this very band, who entered his house in disguise, and carried him off to the woods, and because his ransom was long in coming, they killed him, and when the money came, the messenger found his

lifeless body. I was much alarmed at this story, and regarded it as a forerunner of my own speedy death."

The terrified surgeon, who certainly in his narrative does not affect the virtue he had not, then told the robbers he might have written another letter to Castel Madama with orders to sell whatever he possessed, and to send up the money immediately. This pleased them: another letter was written, and one of the prisoners from San Gregorio was sent off with it.

"After he was gone, I saw my companion the factor Marasca walking about carelessly among the brigands, looking at their arms, and making angry gestures; but he did not speak. Shortly after, he came and sat down by me; it was then that the chief, having a large stick in his hand, came up to him, and without saying a single word, gave him a blow on the back of the head just where it joins the neck. It did not kill him, so he rose and cried most piteously, 'I have a wife and children, for God's sake spare my life!' and thus saying, he defended himself as well as he could with his hands. Other brigands closed round him; a struggle ensued, and they rolled together down a steep precipice. I closed my eyes; my head dropped

Banditti and Robbers.



THE DEATH OF MARASCA.





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on my breast, I heard a cry or two, but I seemed to have lost all sensation. In a very short time the brigands returned, and I saw the chief thrust his dagger, still stained with blood, into its sheath : then turning to me, he announced the death of the factor in these words: ‘Do not fear! we have killed the factor because he was a sbirro; such as you are not sbirri. He looked at our arms, and seemed disposed to murmur; and if the force had come up, he might have been dangerous.’ And thus they got rid of Marasca. The chief, seeing that the money for me still did not come from Tivoli, and being afraid lest troops should be sent, seemed uncertain what to do, and said to his companions, ‘How shall we dispose of our prisoners? We must either kill them, or send them home;’ but they could not decide on either, and he came and sat down by me. I, remembering that I had a little money about me, which might amount altogether to thirty pauls, (three crowns,) gave them frankly to him to gain his good-will. He took it in good part, and said he would keep it to pay the spy.”

It now began to rain very heavily—it was four o'clock in the afternoon, and no messenger returned. At last voices were heard on the hills.

The robbers feared they might be soldiers instead of messengers, but they at last said, "Come down!" There was an anxious silence, but no one came.

"After another short interval, we heard another voice also from above on the left; and then we said, 'Surely this must be the messenger.' But the brigands would not trust to it, and forced us to go on to a place a good deal higher, and level with that whence the voice proceeded. When we reached it they all presented their muskets, keeping the prisoners behind them; and thus prepared to stand on the defensive, they cried out, 'Come forward!' In a few moments two men appeared among the trees; one of them the peasant of Castel Madama, who had been sent in the morning to Signor Celestini at Tivoli, the other the ploughman of San Gregorio his companion. As soon as they were recognized, they were ordered to lie down with their faces to the ground, and asked if they came alone. But the man of Castel Madama answered, 'It would be a fine thing indeed, if I, who am almost dead with fatigue, after climbing these mountains with the weight of five hundred scudi about me, should be obliged to prostrate myself with my face to the earth! Here's your

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money; it was all that could be got together in the town!’ Then the chief took the money, and ordered us to change our station. Having arrived at a convenient place, we stopped, and he asked if there were any letters? Being answered that there were two, he gave them to me to read; and learning from them that the sum sent was five hundred crowns, he counted them, and finding the number exact, said all was well; praised the punctuality of the peasant, and gave him some silver as a reward for his trouble: his companion also received a small present.”

The robbers now released the poor peasants from San Gregorio. “I, therefore,” says the surgeon, “with the peasant of Castel Madama, remained the only prisoners; and we were made to march across the mountains. I asked why they did not set me at liberty, as they had received so considerable a sum on my account? The chief answered, that I must await the return of the messenger with the second letter, who had been sent to Castel Madama. I continued to press him to let me go before night, which was now drawing on apace, saying, that perhaps it had not been possible to procure any money at Castel Madama, and that if I was to remain out all night on the hill

in the cold air, it would have been better to have killed me at once." Then the chief stopped me, and bade me take good care how I said such things, for that to them killing a man was a matter of perfect indifference. The same thing was also said to me by another outlaw, who gave me his arm during our rocky journey. At length we reached the top of a mountain where there were some pools of water formed by the rain; and then they gave me some very hard and black bread that I might eat, and drink some of that water. I drank three times; but I found it impossible to eat the bread."

They continued walking over these mountain tops till midnight, when they met an ass and a shepherd. They mounted the worn-out surgeon on the ass, and the shepherd led them all to his hut, near which was a threshing-floor, and, something much better for them, a sheep-fold, whence a sheep was speedily purloined, skinned, and roasted. It was eaten, too, before the surgeon, who had dropped asleep near the blazing hearth, awoke. But the chief had reserved a few slices for him, which he now spitted on his ram-rod, roasted, and gave to him, apologizing for the absence of salt.

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(Save the chief and a sentinel or two, gorged with mutton and black bread, all the rest of the banditti were fast asleep on the floor, round the fire.) "I could scarcely force myself," says the surgeon, "to swallow a few morsels; but I drank a little wine which had been found in a small barrel at the threshing-floor. This was the only time I saw any of the brigands drink anything but water. The chief told me they were always afraid when fresh wine came, lest it should be drugged; and that they always made whoever brought it drink a good deal of it; and if in two hours no bad symptoms appeared, then they used the wine."

From the shepherd's hut they went to the sheep-fold, where the robbers possessed themselves of some lumps of boiled meat, a great coat, and some cheeses. Here the chief made the poor surgeon write another letter to Castel Madama, telling his friends, that, if they did not send eight hundred crowns on the following day, the robbers would put him to death, or carry him to the woods of Fajola, if there was a farthing less than that sum. "I told the countryman, who was about to carry this letter, to tell my friends that if they found no purchasers at Castel Madama for my effects, which

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I had ordered them to sell, they might send them to Tivoli and sell them there for whatever they would fetch. The chief of the brigands also begged to have a few shirts sent. One of the brigands proposed, I don't know why, to cut off one of my ears, and send it with the letter to Castel Madama. It was well for me that the chief did not approve of this civil proposal; so it was not done. The chief, however, wanted the countryman to set out that moment; but the countryman of Castel Madama said, with his usual coolness, that it was not possible to go down that steep mountain during the night; on which the chief told him he might remain in the sheepcote all night, and set out at daylight. 'But take notice,' said he, 'if you do not return by the twentieth hour to-morrow to the sheepcote with the eight hundred crowns, you may go about your business, but we shall throw Cherubini (the surgeon) into some pit.' The peasant tried to persuade them that perhaps it might not be possible to collect so much money in a small town at so short a notice, and begged to have a little more time: but the chief answered, that they had no time to waste, and that if he had not returned by the twentieth hour, they would kill Cherubini."

The robbers again put themselves in movement. There was an improvement in their road, for instead of the rough thickets, they came to fine tall timber trees, the boles of which were comparatively smooth, save where a fallen tree here and there lay across them. But the surgeon was spent with fatigue, and sore afraid, the threats of death constantly ringing in his ear.

“ I therefore recommended myself to God, and was begging him to have compassion on my wretched state, when one of the brigands, a man of great stature, who figured among them as a kind of second chief, came up to me, and taking me by the arm, assisted me to walk, and said, ‘ Now, Cherubini, that you cannot tell the man of Castel Madama (whom we had left at the sheepcote waiting for day-light,) I assure you that to-morrow, as soon as he returns, you shall go home free, however small be the sum he brings. Be of good cheer therefore, and do not distress yourself.’ At that moment I felt such comfort from the assurances of the outlaw, that he appeared to me to be an angel from heaven ; and without thinking why I should not, I kissed his hand, and thanked him fervently for his unexpected kindness.”

They next laid themselves down to sleep in a

thicket, the robbers spreading sheepskins for the doctor, and the chief wrapping up his legs in his own capote. Two men kept awake as sentinels.

“I know not how long we had rested,” continues Signor Cherubini, “when one of the sentinels came, and gave notice of daybreak. ‘Come to me when it is lighter,’ said the chief; and all was again quiet. I turned my face so as not to see the brigands, and dozed a little, till I was roused by the cry of some wild bird. I am not superstitious; but I had often heard that the shriek of the owl foreboded evil; and, in the state of spirits in which I was, everything had more than its usual effect on me. I started, and said, ‘What bird was that?’ They answered, ‘A hawk.’—‘Thank God!’ I said, and lay down again. Among my sufferings I cannot forget the stinging and humming of the gnats, which fastened on my face and throat; but after the death of poor Marasca, I dared not even raise my hand to drive them away, lest it should be taken for a sign of impatience.”

Soon after this they all arose, and after an hour’s walk halted in another thicket, where they breakfasted. After their meal they lay down to sleep as before, all save one literate bandit, who amused



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himself by reading the romance of the Cavalier Meschino. In an hour they awoke, and fled off, one by one, to a higher station, leaving a sentinel to guard the surgeon.

“ In another hour,” says Signor Cherubini, “ the youngest man of the robbers came to relieve the guard, who then went and joined the others. When I saw this, and perceived they were engaged in a kind of council of war, I feared that they had taken some new resolution about my life, and that the new sentinel was come to put their cruel designs in execution ; but he very soon said to me, ‘ Be of good cheer, for to-night you will be at home ! ’ which gave me some comfort ; but as I could not entirely trust them, I had still an internal fear, which, however, I endeavoured to hide. Shortly afterwards we were called to join the rest, our station being now on the mountain commonly called Colle Picione, not very far from the ancient sanctuary of Mentorella. There we remained the rest of the day, only going out of the way once, on the approach of a flock of goats, that we might not be seen by the goatherds ; but we soon returned. Then the second chief, who said he was of Sonnino, and one of the five who went to treat with the President of Frosinone, began to talk of the

political nature of their situation. He said that Government would never succeed in putting them down by force; that they are not a fortress to batter down with cannon, but rather birds which fly round the tops of the sharpest rocks, without having any fixed home; that if, by any misfortune, seven perished, they were sure of ten recruits to replace their loss; for criminals, who would be glad to take refuge among them, were never wanting; that the number of their present company amounted to a hundred and thirty individuals; and that they had an idea of undertaking some daring exploit, perhaps of threatening Rome itself. He ended by saying, that the only way to put an end to their depredations would be to give them a general pardon without reservation or limitation, that they might all return to their houses, without fear of treachery; but otherwise, they would not trust to, nor treat with any one; and added, that this was the reason for which they had not concluded anything with the Prelate sent to Frosinone to treat with them. As it was, their company was determined to trust nothing but a pardon from the Pope's own lips. One of the brigands begged me to endeavour to obtain from Government the freedom of his wife, Mariuccia Carcapola di Pisterno,

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now in the prison of Saint Michael in Rome. Another said to me, 'Have patience, Signor Cherubini; we made a blunder when we took you; we intended to have had the Prince, who, according to our information, should have passed by at that very time.' In fact, he was to have travelled that road; and just before I passed, not the Prince, but the person commonly called so, the Vice-Prince, or agent, Signor Filippo Gazoni, had gone by, but, fortunately for him, they did not know him, because, as I understood, he was walking along leisurely, only accompanied by an unarmed boy, who was leading his horse. The banditti bit their fingers with rage when they found they had let him slip, for they said they would not have released him under three thousand crowns. The brigand who said all this had the collar of the Madonna delle Carmine round his neck, and said to me 'Suffer patiently, for the love of God.'

"Then the chief of the robbers came to me, and told me he was not very well, and desired me to prescribe for him, which I did, in writing. Another, the same who had taken my watch from me, told me that the watch did not go, and showed it me. I found that he had broken the glass and the minute-hand. He said, if I had any money, he

would sell it me ; but I gave it him back, saying nothing, but shrugging up my shoulders. Meantime the day was drawing to a close, and the chief, taking out his watch, said it was now twenty o'clock.\* He called the shepherd to him, and ordered him to go back to the sheepfold which we had left during the night, and see if the countryman was come back with the answer to my second letter to Castel Madama. In that case he ordered him to accompany him back to the place we were now at ; and if he were not come, he ordered him to wait three hours, and if he did not come then, to return to us alone. The shepherd obeyed, and, after about an hour and a half, he came back with the countryman and another shepherd who had been sent with him. They brought with them two sealed packets of money, which they said contained six hundred crowns. They also brought a few shirts, of home-spun linen, which the chief had begged of me, and some little matter for me to eat, and a little wine to recruit me. But I could take nothing but a pear and a little wine ; the rest was eaten by the robbers. They took the money

\* It will be remembered that the Italians count time by twenty-four hours to the day. The first hour, or one o'clock, being always one hour after sunset.

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without counting, and gave the messengers some silver for their pains ; after which they permitted me to depart. And thus I found myself free from them, after having thanked them for their *civility* and for *my life*, which they had had *the goodness to spare*. On my way homeward, the two men of Castel Madama informed me, that the prisoner from San Gregorio, who was sent, the day before, with the first letter to Castel Madama for money, and who had not been seen since, had really been there, and had gone back the same day, at the hour and to the place appointed, with the sum of one hundred and thirty-seven crowns, sent from Castel Madama ; but the robbers having forgotten to send any one to meet him at the place agreed on, because we were a great way from it, the messenger returned to town with the money, after having waited till night, carrying back the intelligence that the factor had been killed, which alarmed all my townsmen, who began to fear for my life. I found that the last six hundred dollars had been furnished, half by Castel Madama, and half by Tivoli. I went on towards Castel Madama, where all the people anxiously expected me. In fact, a mile before I reached the town, I found a number of people, of all ranks, who had come out to meet

me, and I arrived at home a little before night, in the midst of such public congratulations and acclamations as were never before heard, which presented a most affecting spectacle ! I had hardly arrived when the Arch-Priest Giustini ordered the bells to be rung, to call the people to the parish church. On the first sound, all the people flocked thither with me, to render public and devout thanks to the most merciful God and to our protector Saint Michael the Archangel, for my deliverance. The priest had done the same when he first heard of my capture, and soon after, when he sent the six hundred crowns. Both times he had assembled his congregation in that very church, to offer up public supplications to the Lord, to grant me that mercy which he deigned afterwards to show. I cannot conclude without saying, that the epoch of this my misfortune will be ever remembered by me. I shall always recollect that the Lord God visited me as a father : for, at the moment when his hand seemed to be heavy upon me, he moved the city of Tivoli, and the whole people of Castel Madama, even the very poorest to subscribe their money, and sell their goods, in so short a time, and with such profusion, for my sake. The same epoch will also always remind me what gratitude I owe to

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those, particularly the Signors Cartoni and Celes-tini, both Romans, who with such openness of heart exerted themselves in my favour. I now pray God that he will preserve me from all the bad consequences which commonly arise out of similar misfortunes."

Such is the narrative of Signor Cherubini, which, while it conveys striking pictures of crime and a lawless life, impresses the mind also with touching traits of punctuality, humanity, and generosity on the part of the peasantry and these poor Italians generally. The contrast of vice and virtue, of ferocity and kind-heartedness, is perhaps nowhere more evident than in Italy, where the social affections flourish in the midst of the hardest growth of crime and cruelty.

The stories told and believed by the peasantry, of the origin and initiation of most of the principal outlaws, are horrid in the extreme. Mrs. Graham, to whom I am indebted for so many interesting and characteristic details, furnishes the following, as "a pretty fair specimen" of the whole.

"A man who had accidentally committed homicide, being afraid of the consequences, fled from the States of the Church, to Conca, in the kingdom of Naples. There, being unprovided with a

passport, he was taken up and imprisoned; but 'by the Grace of the Virgin and Saint John the Baptist,' he escaped to the woods: there, after wandering a month, and being almost starved, he met the banditti, who invited him to join them. To this he, nothing loth, consented, when, to try his manhood, they gave him a piece of human flesh roasted to eat, telling him it was part of a Christian's heart! 'It might have been two hearts,' said the ruffian, 'but I would have eaten it!' He had then to perform a noviciate of two years, hewing wood, drawing water, and performing other menial offices; but, a year ago, he figured as the chief of a party among them."

But a probation infinitely more atrocious than this repast on human hearts, was related to myself in the year 1821, when I was travelling in the Abruzzi near the pass of Tagliacozzi, and not far from the frontier of the Roman States. The story was local, but my narrator, a peasant of the country, and then my guide, referred the event to rather a distant period of time.

A young man, who had been several years an outlaw, on the violent death of the chief of the troop he belonged to, aspired to be Capo-bandito, in his stead. He had gone through his noviciate



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with honour, he had shown both cunning and courage in his calling as brigand, but the supremacy of the band was disputed with him by others, and the state of the times bade the robbers be specially careful as to whom they elected for their leader. He must be the strongest-nerved fellow of the set! The ambitious candidate offered to give any, even the most dreadful proof of his strength of nerve, and a monster among his companions proposed he should go to his native village and murder a young girl to whom he had been formerly attached.

“I will do it,” said the ruffian, who at once departed on his infernal mission.

When he reached the village, he dared not present himself, having begun his crimes there by murdering a comrade: he skulked behind an old stone fountain, outside of the village, until near sunset, when the women came forth with their copper vases on their heads to get their supplies of water at the fountain. His mistress came carelessly gossiping with the rest. He could have shot her with his rifle, but he was afraid of pursuit, and wanted, besides, time to secure and carry off a bloody trophy. He therefore remained quiet, only hoping that she might loiter behind the rest. She,

however, was one of the first to balance her vessel of water on her head, and to take the path to the village, whither all the gossips soon followed her. What was now to be done? He was determined to go through the ordeal and consummate the hellish crime. A child went by the fountain whistling. He laid down his rifle, so as not to alarm the little villager, and presenting himself to him, gave him the reliquary he had worn round his neck for years, and which was well known to his mistress, and told him to run with it to her, and tell her an old friend desired to speak with her at the fountain. The child took the reliquary, and a piece of silver which the robber gave him on his vowing by the Madonna to say nothing about the matter in the village before one hour of the night, and ran on to the village. The robber then retired behind the old fountain, taking his rifle in his hand, and keeping a sharp look out, lest his mistress should betray him, or not come alone.

But the affectionate girl, who might have loved him still in spite of his guilt, who might have hoped to render him succour on some urgent need, or, perhaps, to hear that he was penitent and anxious to return to society, went alone and met him at the fountain, where, as the bells of the vil-

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lage church were tolling the Ave Maria, her lover met her, and stabbed her to the heart! The monster then cut off her head, and ran away with it to join the brigands, who were obliged to own, that after such a deed and such a proof as he produced, he was worthy to be their chief.

## BRIGANDS OF LOMBARDY.

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THERE is one part of Lombardy that has always been noted for brigandism. The traveller, who has gone the road between Milan and Turin, will remember the country about Vercelli, Novara, &c. and the frontiers of the Austro-Milanese States, and those of Piedmont, or of his Majesty of Sardinia. That is the spot.

According to my intelligent old friend, Signor C——, in the days of his youth, if you asked an inhabitant of a certain little town, (the *chef-lieu* of the robbers,) in that district, how his father had died, his answer was pretty sure to be “On the wheel !” And his grandfather ?—“On the wheel !” And if you were curious to know what death he expected himself, he was pretty sure to refer you to the same wheel. In short, they were all a most lawless set of fellows. Many years after, when the north of Italy was in the hands of the French,

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when no frontier between the contiguous States was heeded, and when brigandism was almost put down, and the people there reduced to a more peaceful mode of gaining their bread, you would never get one of them to meet a gens-d'armes without flinching. They could not help remembering the old antipathy that existed between them and the agents of the police, and though now pursuing an honest calling, and defended by those laws they had before outraged, they would skulk away at the sight of a distant gens-d'armes, just as the tamed fox, however well protected, sneaks into his kennel if he hear but the distant cry of the hounds.

A gentleman was travelling that road with two gens-d'armes for an escort, which is still considered necessary. He saw a covered country cart meeting his carriage without any appearance of a driver in it: the cart occupied the middle of the road, which was narrow; the day was a hot one, and the tired carter had gone fast to sleep under his awning. The gens-d'armes saw all this, and to rouse him and to cause him to make way, they trotted along the road bawling out lustily. No sooner had the peasant, awakened by the noise, lifted up his sleepy head, and seen the soldiers,

than out he bolted from his cart, threw himself into a deep ditch by the road side, and tried to make off. Aroused, as he had been, from sleep, when the force of habitual impressions is most likely to assert its sway, the sight of the gens-d'armes was too much for him, and it was not until he found he was running some danger of being drowned or smothered in the mud, that he recovered the consciousness of being, *pro tempore*, an honest man with nothing to fear. He then bawled out for help. A helping hand was lent him; and emerging from the "slough of despond," he moved his clumsy vehicle out of the way: but even then, when the gentleman's carriage went on its journey, and the gens-d'armes with it, so strong was the "attraction of repulsion" between the peasant and the soldiers of the police, that the former seemed to drive on his horses with speed until the windings of the road concealed him.

But, in the days to which my amusing old friend, Signor C——'s anecdotes of robbers refer, such fears as these were unknown; and the brigands, instead of being confined to a limited district, had the free range of the Lombard plain, and carried on their depredations under, nay, even within the walls of Milan. This was about the year 1770-1,

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when Austria had abandoned her beautiful Lombard provinces to the *mis-government* of certain secretaries of State, who were almost as great robbers within the walls of the capital, as the banditti were without, and men in every way disqualified for the maintenance of good order and prosperity. The bands of outlaws increased to such a degree that no farming establishment, however large, and no village or small town, was secure from their depredations. They were accustomed to levy contributions both in specie and in kind, but do not appear to have adopted the improvement of carrying off prisoners and keeping them until ransomed. On the contrary, my friend, who was an ardent sportsman in his youth, says, that, though he and his comrades, respectable inhabitants of Milan, could hardly go a mile beyond La Porta Romana, or the Roman gate of the city, without meeting some of these robbers, they were never farther molested by them, than in being obliged to give them a little powder and shot. This was indeed generally the only transaction between the brigands and sportsmen. A fact comparatively in honour of the liberal spirit of the brigands of Lombardy, for in certain other countries in the south of Italy, and in my days, as I have sufficient-

ly shown, a man of property, who had fallen into the hands of robbers, with only a snipe in his bag, would have been no more allowed to escape than if he carried the revenue of many a fat acre in his purse; it would have been there—"Off to the mountains with him, and a speedy ransom, or a cut throat!"

It is curious, to one acquainted with the present state of Milan, to hear an account, like my old friend's, of unpaved, dark streets, where the only illumination was a little lamp glimmering here and there at a corner before the shrine of some Madonna, and where robbery and assassination were the occurrences of nearly every night that threw its mantle over the *duomo*.\* But so it really was with Milan about the good year—70. The civic mode, or that adopted by the robbers and murderers within the city, was, to throw a large sack over their victims as they hurried along the streets, and then to drag them under the deep, dark portal of some palace, or down some darker lane, where their business was done most expeditiously. The "mouth-plaster," as attributed to our Burkers, would be an insignificant word compared to the "sack" at Milan in those days. The cry of

\* The magnificent gothic Cathedral of Milan.



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“*sacco ! sacco !*” would throw a whole street, a whole quarter of the city, into the agonies of alarm.

This agreeable state of things lasted as long as the corrupt and imbecile system which had permitted it to gain strength, but when the Archduke Ferdinand came, and a more virtuous and firmer government was established, a speedy end was put to it, and both country and city were restored to order. The advent of that Prince was, in truth, a most fatal occurrence for the Lombard brigands ; they were cut to pieces, dispersed, or made prisoners ; and in Milan alone, Signor C—— saw twenty-four in one day broken on the wheel. The original horrors of this barbarous process of capital execution were, however, abrogated in practice—the criminals were killed first with the executioner’s knife, and then broken with the wheel. As it was, however, the wholesale execution which my friend, then a stripling, had the extraordinary strength of nerve to stand by and witness, from its commencement to its close, had such an effect upon him, that he could eat no dinner for a whole week. I should have wondered if he could !\*

\* While these pages were going through the press, my friend the Count ——, to whom, among others acquainted with Italy,

I had applied for anecdotes respecting the banditti of that country, sent me a short, but amusing letter, which I take the liberty of translating.

“How much I regret not having remembered in time that I might have suggested to you for ‘your Plutarch of outlaws and assassins,’ the trial (so famous in all Lombardy) of Legarino and Battista Scarlino, who, two centuries back, flourished under the Spanish government! They were two chiefs of banditti whose nest was in the forest della Merlata, (now an inconsiderable wood, but which then extended from Como to Barlassina, or nearly twelve miles,) who protracted their career for many years, frequenting all the markets and fairs, and often, in disguise, penetrating into Milan itself under the very eyes of the Spanish governor. At last they fell into a panic, were arrested, tried, tortured, had their flesh torn with pincers, their bodies broken on the wheel, and quartered—according to the jurisprudence and philanthropy of those times. The story is contained in a little book known and read by all our children with much more gusto than their Virgil or their Bible. Another nest of robbers, famous even down to our times, was Retegno, a little borgo between Lodi and Cremona, and previously to 1796 belonging to the Duke of Parma, although on the left side of the Po. ‘Robber and Retegno’ is still a proverbial saying with us in Lombardy.”

## NEAPOLITAN AND ROMAN BRIGANDS.

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### SUNDRY ANECDOTES, FACETIOUS AND SERIOUS.

MANY of the stories of the Roman and Neapolitan banditti are far from being of so tragical a nature as those I have related. On the contrary, a jest-book might be filled with very funny stories regarding them. The brigands were often facetious and full of frolicsome tricks, at the not very serious expense of those they waylaid, while at times they were the butts or victims to those who fell in with them.

In the Lent of 1816, as a company of actors, some singers and some comedians, were on their way to one of the small provincial towns on the Adriatic, where they were engaged to play at Easter, their rambling old vettura was stopped by a formidable band. Obeying with all the alacrity their fears and nervousness would permit the command of the robbers to descend and be rifled, a prima donna and

a seconda donna, two male tenors and a most masculine basso, came out of the body of the very primeval vehicle, at the same time that a tiranno domestico, a primo amoroso, and a fiddler, the leader of the orchestra, emerged from the head or coupé of the machine. They were almost dead with affright, but as they laid themselves down by the road-side previously to the operation of being rifled of what they had about them, they protested they were only poor virtuosi—that all their trunks contained were certain theatrical dresses of no value to the robbers, whilst their loss would be utter ruin to themselves.

“Cospetto di Bacco—Genti da teatro—theatrical people, bravo !” cried several of the band ; “but we must see whether this be all true.”

On unlashing the baggage and opening the poor players’ trunks, the robbers found a very satisfactory confirmation of their statement. The contents principally consisted of a few dirty dresses set off with tawdry and tinsel, an abundance of rouge pots, and a paucity of chemises, &c. sundry tragical wigs and sundry comic ditto, a Roman toga or so made out of an old red silk curtain, two or three pair of inexpressibles *à la Turque* and an *habit de gala à la Louis Quatorze*, to be worn by

the lover. As for the fiddler, he had nothing but his fiddle-case wherein lay his mute instrument, flanked by a shirt or two—his wardrobe for the campaign. But in lugging out these valuable “*kists*” from the carriage, the robbers lugged out something that they thought might prove of more value—it was a little ruddy-faced Englishman, who had been in no hurry to follow the example of his fellow-travellers, but lay *perdu* in one corner of the vettura.

“*Tutti gl' Inglesi son ricchi!*”\* say the Italians, but in the absence of a few millions of Englishmen who might any day offer a melancholy proof to the contrary, the little red-faced man from the corner certainly was one striking exception to what the robbers thought the general rule—our wealth. He was a jolly son of Neptune, with nothing to live upon but a lieutenant's half-pay and his own good spirits, and, save a silver watch, had not many things of greater price about him than the players. He was as good-humoured a little fellow as ever trod quarter-deck or rode “for cheapness” through Italy with a vetturino, and as he only made a good joke in bad Italian when the robbers took his watch, they left him his purse, (which from what

\* “All the English are rich.”

has been aforesaid, the reader will judge was not a heavy one,) and turned to the players, who still lay with their faces to the ground, telling them to rise and give them a song. The poor virtuosi rose, but they still showed an alarm for their personal safety and the integrity of their goods and chattels.

“*Non abbiate paura,*” (have no fear,) said the captain of the banditti, “You have nothing worth our taking; but it is long since we could recreate ourselves at an opera, so sing us a duetto and an aria or two!”

“Ay, sing us an aria—sing us an aria!” cried the robbers.

Accordingly, after a preliminary hem and spit, the prima donna sang a bravura aria, the close of which was heartily applauded by the banditti, who had beaten time during its progress with the butt end of their long guns.

Italians never encore. The robbers begged to be favoured with a duetto. One of the tenors joined the prima donna, and a duetto was executed equally to their satisfaction. The robbers had not enjoyed such a treat as this for a long time—they were delighted with it! At the conclusion of the duetto they begged for the grace of a terzetto.

The basso joined, and as the fiddler had by this time got his instrument in order, he also struck in with an accompaniment, which tickled the ears of the robbers exceedingly. The audience was rather a curious one. There were the ten or twelve robbers with their high conical hats, gaudy jackets, and sandalled-feet—their d—d—(the expression was the lieutenant's) long guns, and knives and pistols in their girdles, and their wild features owning the gentle influence of sound; there were the vetturino and the postilion—the former risen from under the mules' bellies, the latter from before the mules' feet—for such are the posts the brigands assign these functionaries when an attack is made on a vettura—and there was the tough little Englishman with his seal-skin travelling-cap, trim blue frock-coat and Wellingtons—all after awhile forgetful of their situations, and occupied by the music and the fun of the moment; for, be it said, *sub rosa*, all the songs were not about *Bell Idol mios*, and *Caro per tes*, but seasoned with salt and smut—perhaps for the gratification of the more vulgar taste of the brigands, perhaps in accordance with that of the singers. When the terzetto was finished, the basso modestly proposed that the brigands should allow them to continue their journey.

“ *Da quì cent’ anni !*” (a hundred years hence,) cried one or two of the brigand amateurs.

“ Not yet—not yet !” said the captain ; “ here’s a fine, opera-looking fellow, with a *faccia di musico*, who hasn’t favoured us with a single note—we must first have your song !” and he looked in the face of the second tenor, who thought him not a man to be refused.

This warbler, however, had not got beyond his first flourish, when one of the robbers, who had been stationed on the top of a hill near the road, like sister Anne on the tower in Blue-beard, to see if any body was coming, blew a shrill whistle, and presently ran down to tell them he had seen a number of travellers approaching. This intelligence drove the robbers away up the hills towards the woods. Their hurry, however, did not prevent them from thanking the vocalists, from whom they took not even so much as a bajocco. The players and the postilion soon put up the trunks—the Englishman’s light *valise* had never been removed from under the coach-seat, and they were all ready, and drove off laughing at the adventure, before the travellers announced by the sentinel reached the spot. Whether these were wealthy, and well-guarded ; whether they were plundered, or whether they



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were protected by poverty, equal to that of his own party, and got off with a song, the Englishman never learned. He was so much amused with his rencounter, that he used often to tell the story.

Not long after this, as Lady B—— was travelling from Rome to Naples, with rather a numerous suite, she “fell among thieves.” The robbers this time had a tolerably good booty, but there was one excellent laugh against them. Her ladyship’s medical attendant had a large medicine chest in the carriage; this was immediately broken open by the robbers, who thought the neat and strong mahogany case must contain jewels or other valuables. They were disappointed, and somewhat puzzled, when they found a number of square crystal bottles, &c. Two of the robbers took out each one of these bottles, whose medicinal contents were liquid and bright—the one like rosolio, the other like *maraschina di Zara*. The two robbers concluded at once they were nothing else than these favourite liqueurs, or some foreign cordial of a similar nature and excellence; and anxious for the first draught, each put his bottle to his mouth, and did not withdraw it until he had taken a hearty swig. Then, indeed, the bottles were withdrawn, and dashed, with horrible curses, to the earth; and the

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two rogues, with terror in their countenances, threw themselves on the doctor, in the same breath, threatening to kill him, and begging to know whether they were poisoned, and he could cure them? The worthy practitioner, who was an Irishman, and as such fond of a joke, would have had here a good opportunity of indulging in one, by making the trembling fellows believe for awhile that they had swallowed some infernal poison, worse than the *acqua tophana*; but under circumstances, and in the presence of armed banditti, he thought it more prudent to tell them that they had only swallowed a little medicine, which could do them no harm, however badly it might taste, and to reserve his laugh at them for taking his physic for sweet waters, till a more convenient opportunity.

In the next little anecdote, another brigand of another band cut a still more ridiculous figure. My friend Mr. W——, a merchant of Naples, was travelling post with a Swiss merchant, and had nearly reached the city of Capua, which is only about fourteen miles from Naples, when his carriage was suddenly stopped. It was night, but a beautiful moon—the moon of Naples, which, as the witty Marchese Caraccioli used to say, was worth a London sun, illuminated the scene, and

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allowed W—— to see that there were only three or four brigands near the coach, and that they had not yet knocked the postilion off the horses. W—— took his measures accordingly with great presence of mind and boldness. As the foremost brigand came to the side of the carriage, within reach, bawling and cursing for those within to come out and be robbed, he caught hold of the ruffian by the breasts of his jacket, and called out to the postilion to gallop off for Capua, where he should be well rewarded. The postilion, who had known him before on the road, took W—— at his word, and, with a boldness rarely found in his class, whipped his horses, that went off, (as Neapolitan horses generally will do,) “an end.” As the postilion’s whip touched the withers of his steeds, a bullet whizzed past his head, but missed its aim. Away then went the carriage and the merchants and the robber as swift as the old witches in Goethe’s *Faustus*; W——, who was a robust man, keeping a firm hold of the robber, who dangled—his head and shoulders in, and the rest of his body outside of the vehicle,—like a lamb or a calf over a butcher’s cart. W——’s companion occasionally assisted him. After numerous but vain struggles to extricate himself from

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their grasp, the captured brigand, whose legs were bruised in the cruelest manner against the rapid carriage wheels, and his breath almost bumped out of his body, protested it was all a mistake, and begged most piteously to be released. The merchants, however, kept the prize they had made in so curious a manner, and soon arrived at Capua. This being a fortified town, most awkwardly for travellers, placed on the high road, they had to wait some time until a letter was sent to the commandant, and permission obtained to admit them. When the drawbridge was lowered, they rolled over it, with the robber still dangling at the coach-side, and delivered him at the guard-house. The next morning the merchants appeared before the justice of peace, and after their depositions had been received, the brigand was given over to the civil authorities, and cast into prison, where he lay for many months, without being brought to judgment. What finally became of him I know not; but I remember very well, that my friend W——, though he was rather proud of the novel exploit, had so much trouble in consequence of it, and the somewhat peculiar course of Neapolitan justice, that he used often to wish he had left the fellow in the road.

The next of my concluding anecdotes of Italian banditti on which I lay my hand, is of a more tragical nature.

“In the month of March 1817,”\* says a popular Author of Travels, “I was out with one of my friends on a shooting party near Aquila, when I heard the farmers talking of robberies without number committed by the troop of *The Independence*. There was much talent, and a Turkish bravery, shown in the manner in which they were achieved. I paid little attention to all this; robberies in these parts are so common; I was all eyes to observe the manners of the people. I gave some money to a poor woman who was with child, and who, I was told, was a soldier’s widow, when one said to me: “Oh, Sir, she is not to be pitied, she has the ration of the banditti,” and they went on to give me the following detail:—

“‘There is in this country a company of thirty men and four women, all mounted in a superior manner upon blood-horses. This band calls itself the troop of *The Independence*; its chief is a former *Marechal-de-logis* of king Joachim.† He orders such a landlord, or such a farmer, to put

\* Rome, Naples, and Florence in 1817, by (a fictitious name) the Count de Stendhal. The Author’s real name is Beyle.

† Murat.

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such a sum of money, on such a day, at the foot of such a tree ; if not, he himself will be murdered and his house set on fire. When this troop are on the march, they send orders the day before to all the farmers on their route, to have a repast ready at such an hour, for so many persons, the best that their means will afford. This service is more regularly performed than the provision for the royal household in its progress through the country.'

" About a month before I received this detail, a farmer, being piqued at the imperious manner in which the repast was ordered, sent information of it to the general, and the *Independents* were surrounded by a numerous band of infantry and cavalry ; they fought their way through, covering the ground with the dead bodies of the soldiers, while not one of their own party fell. Learning the treachery of the farmer, they sent notice to him to settle his affairs. Three days after they took possession of the farm, where they instituted a tribunal, and the farmer being put to the torture, confessed every thing. After deliberating together awhile in secret, they approached the unhappy farmer, and threw him into a large cauldron which was upon the fire, full of milk for making cheese. When he had boiled there for some time, they

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forced all the servants to eat of this infernal banquet.

“The chief could easily increase his troop to a thousand men; but he says that his talents for command will not go beyond a band of thirty, and he restrains himself to keeping up this number. He receives daily applications from people to be received into the band; but he requires a title, that is, wounds received in the field of battle, not certificates given from complaisance:—these are his very words.

“This spring, the peasants of these parts suffered very much from scarcity. The chief of the Independents distributed among the sufferers tickets upon the rich. The rations were a pound and half of bread for a man, a pound for a woman, and two pounds for a woman with child. The woman who excited my curiosity, had for a month received six of these tickets in the week for two pounds of bread each. For the rest, no one ever knows where the band are to be found, they get all the spies on their side. In the time of the Romans this chief of banditti would have been a Marcellus.”

Though there is a little exaggeration in this account, the main points are correct, more particu-

larly that which regards the robbers' provident care of the poor.

"*Ho fatto più carità,*" (I have done more acts of charity,) said one of these brigands, when he fell into the hands of the law, "than any three convents in these provinces!" And so, perhaps, he had, and at as little cost to himself as the monks, who beg themselves (as he had stolen) from others, what they live upon and give to beggars.

Though the "Independenti" may have been averse to increase their band with men, they seem to have been anxious to recruit it with women, for at the end of 1817, as I was crossing the range of mountains above Sora, that separates the Garigliano from the lake of Celano, in the Abruzzi, I heard the following event, at a little village where I stopped to refresh myself.

A pretty girl of the place, betrothed to a respectable young farmer, was carried off by the robbers as she was going with an old female relative to early morning mass at a chapel on the skirts of the village. The alarm was instantly spread, and a pursuit undertaken by all the fair captive's relatives and friends, with the agonized lover at their head. After scouring the country for several hours, without finding any trace of the brigands,



many of the pursuing party, through fatigue and dread of advancing farther into the mountains towards the place where they had reason to apprehend the band was collected in force, hung back, and talked of returning home. The desperate lover would not pause a moment, but still hurried forward with a braver or more deeply interested few. But even these few, one by one, abandoned, what seemed so hopeless or desperate a chase, or, unable to keep up with the speed of the active, young lover, followed him trembling and panting, at a distance.

He was alone, and far a-head of them, when he heard a shriek. Flying in the direction of the sound, he soon came to a wooded hollow, where he saw through the boles of the trees his affianced struggling in the arms of a desperate-looking ruffian. Such a moment, to a bold young lover, was not a moment for hesitation or calculation,—he glided through the trees, and before the robber could seize his carbine, which lay only a few feet from the spot where his struggling victim had dragged him—almost before the robber could draw his dagger, he ran his sword home to his heart. The released girl threw herself into her lover's arms; but there was yet work to do ere he could

resign himself to his transports. A second brigand, who had been stationed at the edge of the wood to keep watch, heard the shout of the lover as he made his assault, and the curse of his comrade or superior as he fell beneath it, and now rushed to the spot, with that brigand yell which the poor peasantry so much dread. The young man, with his weeping mistress still hanging on his neck, drew behind a tree—he had the advantage of a trifling elevation in his favour, and as the robber had his last step on this, and came close to him, he suddenly turned round the tree, put his foot on the fallen ruffian, who still murmured in his throat, and with a pistol, shot the second villain through the body. Supporting and caressing the dear girl his valour had so opportunely liberated, he then made all the haste he could out of the hollow, and soon came in sight of the few friends who had followed him thus far, and of whom some had been brought to a stand still, and others put to a retrograde flight by the report of his pistol in the wood. The unexpected sight, and the triumphant shouts of the lover, with his recovered affianced one, brought them, however, speedily together, and they returned to the village, with more joy than they hoped for when they set out from it on their pursuit.

Banditti and Robbers.



A YOUNG FARMER OF THE ABRUZZI RESCUING HIS BRIDE.



The band of the "Independenti" was destroyed a few months after this event.

One of the boldest deeds of resistance to the brigands was performed by a Major on Murat's staff, a native of one of the German cantons of Switzerland, or from the confederacy of the Rhine, I forget which. His name, I think I can remember, was Vollf. This officer was travelling post from Naples to Rome with despatches, in a little, low, open caleche: he had not even a servant with him. In the Pontine Marshes he was stopped by six sturdy and well-armed brigands. Expecting no resistance from a single man, the robbers stood by the door of the carriage uttering tremendous curses and commanding him to descend. This he presently did; but as he left his seat he grasped a ready brace of pistols, and crossed his arms under his military cloak; and as he touched the ground he pressed a trigger on either side of him, and two of the brigands, who were almost in contact with his person, fell dead by the carriage. His sabre was as ready as his pistols—with it he cleft the head of one robber who fell, and wounded another, who then, with his two unhurt but terrified companions, took to flight, and left the officer the master of the field.

The unluckiest thing the Neapolitan and Roman

banditti about the frontiers did in my time was to take an Austrian Colonel, on the staff of General Frimont, then Commander-in-Chief at Naples. They carried this officer to the mountains, where they kept him many days, which I have heard him describe as days of continual alarm and horror, and at last procured a good ransom for him. But a dreadful vengeance followed close on this compliance, which had been necessitated by consideration for the safety of the Colonel, whom the ruffians would most assuredly have murdered, had the ransom not been paid. Old Frimont sent nearly his whole force of jagers, or light troops, against them. Measures were concerted with the Papal Government. The Austrians were allowed free ingress into the Roman States; and they hunted the brigands in the mountains from place to place, with a most persevering activity. The shepherds and other peasants were seized, and forced to act as guides. The enraged Austrians were not restrained by many scruples. Wherever they found men with arms, they shot them: in some instances they burned down whole villages. The wives of the brigands, in the course of these tragical visitations, in several instances displayed a heroism worthy of ancient Roman matrons, and

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the soldiery were obliged to deal with them as though they had been men. An officer of jagers with whom I was acquainted, was shot in the shoulder, from behind a rock, by one of these heroines, who, when made prisoner, and threatened with instant death unless she showed the track of the brigands, clenched her fist, and said, looking at the rock from which they had dragged her, "Unbaptized dogs that ye are ! you may as well attempt to make those stones speak, as to make me divulge where are my husband, my brother, and my friends !" And even when the jagers levelled their rifles and put their fingers to the trigger, not a word could they force from the woman, who muttered something to herself, as though a prayer to the Madonna, or her Guardian Saint.

There is very little doubt that the Austrians shot many a poor mountaineer that was no robber, but they certainly succeeded in putting down the banditti, who from that time (in 1824) never recovered their former importance and audacity, until the recent political troubles in Romagna.\*

\* It is worthy of observation, that the celebrated Capitan Graziosi, who lately distinguished himself in the Pope's service against the insurgents, had been a notorious brigand chief, and pardoned and employed by the Papal government.

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The Austrians did not, however, achieve this without tremendous sufferings and losses. Frimont thought proper to keep forces in the lawless country he had purged. Those in the mountains fared pretty well, but the ranks of the poor jagers in the valley of the Garigliano, and in other low, marshy places, where they were stationed nearly a whole summer, were awfully thinned by malaria fevers of peculiar malignity. I had myself seen some time before, in the Abruzzi, a fine battalion of this truly excellent branch of the Austrian army; it was composed almost entirely of Bohemians, young and florid men. I met the same battalion at the end of this year, and found one half of it dead or in the hospital! I inquired after three of the officers to whom I had been indebted for much civility while travelling, and was told that one of them, a noble young fellow of three or four-and-twenty, had left his bones by the banks of the Garigliano, the other two were gone to the hospital at Naples. This is something much worse than dying in the "deadly breach," or on the field of battle, where, at least, (if they do not mis-spell our names,) we may have the honour of ornamenting a Gazette of victory or glory!

It was about this time, that I, who had twice gone safely through the pass of Bovino, even when



those Coryphei of banditti, the Vardarelli, were at the plenitude of their power, and who for seven years (in which I by no means led a sedentary or fixed life) had always escaped falling into the hands of a respectable band of brigands, fell unluckily under the clutches of a contemptible gang of novices and bunglers.

My friend, the Prince D'I——, whose meritorious and (for his country) rare exertions to improve his estates, I have mentioned in an early part of this volume, had also undertaken to drain an immense extent of land he held between the mouth of the river Volturno and the lake of Patria—an enterprize in which, to the disgrace of his wealthy but unenterprizing relations, and of the imbecile Government of the time, which, instead of encouraging, thwarted him, he was left to fail and to ruin his fortune. The place was only some fifteen miles from the capital, and whilst the labours of digging canals and making embankments were in full activity, the Prince was accustomed to go down three or four times in the week, carrying money on the Saturday to pay the labourers. I accompanied him very frequently. It was imprudent, no doubt, but though the Prince had a good number of armed *guardiani* in his service, we always went without an escort and frequently with-

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out arms. Our road, after leaving the town of Pozzuoli, was chiefly through a solitary and wild country that bore rather a bad character; but no robberies had been heard of for a long time, and from the constant employment he gave to so many of the neighbouring peasantry, my friend might deem himself a popular character. In short, we had fifty times made the journey, and with good sums of money, without any *mauvais rencontre*, and thought we never should meet any, when early one fine spring morning, as we were driving in a little drosky, over a rough and narrow road that ran through fields of lupins, which in that climate grow to the height of six or seven feet, I was cut short in a story I was telling, by having a long gun put to my breast by a fellow who had been concealed in the lupin-field. At the same instant my friend received the same compliment, and our driver, a boy of fourteen or fifteen, who was riding *en postillon*, was knocked off his horse. We had each a pistol and no more in the carriage, and these we had to draw from under the apron. My friend moved his arm to catch his,—I was disengaging my arm from my cloak to do the same, when with the eye of a military man he glanced at the fellows' guns, which almost touched our breasts,

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and saw they were full cocked. There was no chance—we had to draw our pistols from the pockets of the carriage and to cock them—and the robbers were swearing they would fire into our hearts, if we did not put our hands out of the carriage and instantly descend. Had we hesitated, of a certainty they would have shot us both from very fear; for as we afterwards learned they knew very well the Prince had pistols with him, and only a few days before we had been amusing ourselves on the estate by firing at a mark, when he, as a good shot, rather surprised the country people from whom the rogues had in all probability heard of his address. Whatever I might have done, he would not have missed his aim at twenty paces—but they were only their muskets' length from us. As it was, however, our case was hopeless, and bidding me, in English, which he spoke very well, step out of the carriage, and say nothing to the ruffians, he asked them what they would of him. “Your money, you robber! you infamous assassin!” was the reply of these honest men, who indeed kept up their courage, all the time they were with us and robbing us, by calling us these names and others, which those who knew the low Neapolitans may fancy, but which I may not repeat.

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“Take it,” said the Prince, pointing to the canvass bags that lay at his feet, “Take it, and go to the devil!” He was a fine, athletic, commanding figure of a man, and well known to be a brave one—even then, completely in their power as he was, they were afraid to approach him to take the money, and insisted, with the most horrible oaths, that he should descend, or they would fire upon him. The fellow who seemed to be the leader of the enterprise, had his finger on his trigger. I, who was standing by the road-side with an ugly gun still at my breast, now thought it time to say, “For heaven’s sake come down.” My friend stepped out of the carriage, and again told them to take the money and be off. But now, though a novice in his profession, one of the robbers, insisting on the *faccia-in-terra* ceremony, swore he would shoot us unless we lay down with our faces to the ground. This we would not do. In the next instant, the villain who had approached the carriage, cried “*Ecco le pistole!*—Here are the pistols—it’s all right—never mind now!” and taking out the brace, he threw away the priming, and, after dragging them, with their pans open, through the wet grass, he then threw them into the bottom of the carriage, and drew out the money, which was contained in two canvass bags.

All the while this was performing, the fellow who stood guard over me, trembled with agitation : he shook, indeed, to such a degree, that knowing, as I well did, the crazy nature of guns of common Neapolitan manufacture, and seeing his close to my body and ready to go off, I apprehended the bungler would shoot me without intending it — and once requested he would take it from my breast, as I was unarmed and could make no resistance.

When the money had been thrown in among the tall lupins, with a repetition of the pretty epithets they had already honoured us with, they lifted up the poor boy, who was almost dead with affright, from before the horses' heads, and made us get into the carriage and drive on. They swore they would shoot us if we looked back. This, however, we did when at a short distance, and saw them mount their horses, which had been concealed from us in the thick high lupin-field, and strike across the country.

The scene of the robbery was little more than a mile from the estate, where the Prince, at the time, had several hundred men at work, and thither we now drove at a gallop.

The loss had been a heavy one—for owing to his not having made his payments to the labourers the preceding week, my friend had three thousand

Neapolitan ducats, or five hundred pounds, with him in the bags. The robbers never touched our persons, or said a word about our delivering what we had in our pockets. Had they done so, I should have lost only a few dollars in silver and a watch of slight value, but they would have found on the Prince rather a heavy purse of gold and a very valuable watch.

We soon reached the estate, where my friend, who had repressed his mortification and anger, gave them full vent, when a silly old man in his service as a sort of factor, recommended, as the first thing essential in such a case, that we should both get bled, to obviate the effects resulting from sudden alarm. This is a common Neapolitan practice, but, I believe, besides my friend's burst of rage and contempt, I stormed at the old fool as well, for proposing it in our case. We were presently on horseback with a formidable posse of *guardiani*, *fattori*, and *scrivani*, all mounted and well armed, and, dividing into different parties, scoured the country in pursuit of the robbers.

From the solitude and wildness of the country, which for the greater part is covered by *pantani* or marshes, lakes, and almost impenetrable woods, we had slight hopes, when we set out, of catching them. Yet, from the shortness of the time that had

elapsed, and the speed at which we rode, we were close upon them, and at one time fancied we should catch them, for we fell in with a poor old peasant woman who had just seen four men dividing two bags of money, which they were probably doing thus early for the convenience of carrying it—two thousand five hundred ducats, in silver, in each bag, being a good weight. Encouraged by this information, we galloped on. Smarting as we were under the recent outrage, had we caught the robbers, I am confident we should have taken justice into our own hands and shot them, without waiting for the tardy decisions of the courts—but, alas! we were not so fortunate. We hunted, in vain, through a complete labyrinth of cross-roads or rather paths, beat several woods, and interrogated several shepherds, in vain, and were at last obliged to return to our canal-digging and embankments, with our original loss—and with our revenge ungratified.

When we returned to Naples that night, we had the consolation of hearing from all the friends we met, “I told you so!—I knew how it would be!—I wonder you haven’t been both murdered long ago, going with money through that cut-throat country!” Some also talked about bleeding—but, in a metaphorical sense, surely my friend had been bled enough!

When we had dined we went to the Minister of Police, who was, where every Neapolitan who can afford it is at that time of the night, at the Opera. We went there too. The next morning, however, the Prince saw the man in authority, who engaged that nothing should be neglected for the detection and arrest of the offenders. We were pretty certain that these men were not regular robbers, and that they belonged to the immediate neighbourhood of the estate. We had yet another clue — by a very extraordinary circumstance, all the money was in two-carlin pieces (in value about eight-pence each), and by tracing a sudden influx of this particular coin in any of the little towns or villages, a discovery might be made.

To be brief, in about a fortnight four men were arrested and thrown into the prison of the Vicaria at Naples. Some six weeks after their arrest, the Prince, myself, and the boy who was driving us, were summoned to that prison, and asked if we could recognize the men if they were shown us. My friend and myself both confidently affirmed that we could, for we had marked them well during our short interview. The boy was less confident.

The Prince was then conducted into a hall in the prison, leaving me and the boy together. In a



few minutes a gaoler returned without the Prince, and desired me to follow him, which I did, leaving the boy alone. I was ushered into a dark dirty apartment, where a dozen or fifteen ruffianly-looking fellows were ranged in a line, and was told to point out among them the perpetrators of the robbery. Being short-sighted I went close up to this villainous file, and as soon as my eye became accustomed to the faulty light of the place, I pointed out one of my *ci-devant* calumniators.

“Touch him with your hand,” cried a little man in the corner, who was noting down what passed.

I laid my hand on the ruffian, who said with a bold enough laugh, “*Ah! Signor mio, l’ avete sbagliato gruosso!*” (Ah, Sir! you have made a gross mistake.) But when I laid my hand on a second, I saw that fellow’s countenance change, and that he could scarcely avoid shrinking from my touch. When my recognition was finished, I was removed to another room and left alone, and the boy was called in. When the boy had picked out his men, they brought him into the room where I was, and then led us to the Prince. It appeared that my friend, and myself, and the boy had selected the same individuals, only that the boy had at first been in doubt as to one of them.

On the strength of such evidence as this alone, one might have hoped for a speedy and decisive trial. But we were at Naples! I heard nothing more of the robbers for some months, when I was called to attend a trial, which, when I went to the court, I found, without learning why, was postponed.

In this interim there had been some talk in the neighbourhood, and even on the estate, that vengeance would be taken on us by the robbers' kinsmen and friends, for maliciously detaining in prison innocent, unfortunate men, which said individuals turned out to be, as we expected, of those parts, and acquainted with the circumstance that the Prince carried good sums of money there every Saturday. For a month or so we had an escort of *guardiani*, but then went and came alone as before, frequently travelling in the darkness of night. I am fain to confess that at first, whenever I saw fellows skulking along the solitary roads with long guns in their hands, (which happened rather frequently, as, spite of the prohibition of Government, nearly every peasant had his gun in that wild district,) I felt rather uncomfortable, and took care, at least, that my pistol should not be under the apron and uncocked. But this wore off, and

we never heard of the prisoners' kinsmen and friends.

It was nearly two years after the offence that I was again summoned to the Vicaria. This time the trial really began; but there were only three prisoners produced,—the fourth had contracted a disease and died in the prison! Had I met either of these men in the pursuit when my blood was hot, I should most assuredly have had the heart to blow his brains out. At the moment I was first confronted with them in prison, I might have borne to see one or two of them hanged; but after this long interval, in which one of them had died in a dungeon; in which I had been occupied by so many other thoughts, and feelings, and pursuits; in which, on the whole, I had enjoyed so much, and the three men, in whose hands my life had been, now crouching before me, emaciated and broken by their long and rigorous confinement, had suffered so much, I am sure, had I been able, I would have opened their prison doors and set them free. I felt sick at heart when I had to make my deposition.

One of the curious features in this extraordinary trial was, that I was never put to my oath; for when it came to that test, the presiding judge, who knew very little of me, said that my word as an

Englishman and a gentleman was enough! The compliment did not prevent my astonishment at the time, and my reference in my own mind to the modes of criminal procedure in my own country. My being a Protestant, I fancy, could have nothing to do in the matter, and indeed in more than one instance I had been put to my oath in the kingdom of Naples before the health officers, on arriving at a Lazzaretto.

Besides my evidence, which I thought was full and decisive, there was that of the boy and of several other witnesses, including the old woman. When I thought sentence was going to be pronounced, the court broke up, and the prisoners were remanded. I stayed at Naples five or six months longer without hearing anything more of the robbers; what became of them I know not, for at the end of that period I quitted the country and transferred myself to a land where justice is much more summary—I mean Turkey.

It was said by many of the Neapolitans at the time, that the robbers, who had been taken long before they could possibly spend so considerable a sum, (a fortune almost to men of their condition in that country!) had made good use of it in delaying the law's severity. What I know is, that

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my friend never saw a carlin of his three thousand ducats.

But what I know also is, the proneness of the Neapolitans to speak ill of each other, and to vituperate their own Government. I have, moreover, lived too many years in that country, to adopt the sweeping prejudices of hasty and unexamining travellers, or to believe all or even a tithe of what is asserted against the Italians generally; still, however, the facts were such as I have represented them, and the comments they must provoke, in whatever way we look at them, cannot be otherwise than most unfavourable to the criminal courts of Naples.

That beautiful 'country has now a new and a young King, who has, it is said, already effected many salutary reforms; let us hope he has directed, or will direct his attention to the proper administration of justice, which will be a greater benefit to the Neapolitans, than, under circumstances, their Spanish Constitution could have proved.

And now good night to Italian brigands, and once more farewell to Italy!—a country where my brightest days have been passed, for I can never hope to retrace the pleasant period of life between

seventeen years and twenty-seven—a country for which I may assert a heart-warm admiration, knowing it and living in it so long as I have done, without, I trust, incurring the suspicion of sentimentalism or affectation—a country where I have had, and am confident still have, some of my best friends, and where, next to my native land, I should prefer to end my life, and find, with—

“ Un sasso

Che distingua le mie dalle infinite

Ossa che in terra e in mar semina morte,” \*

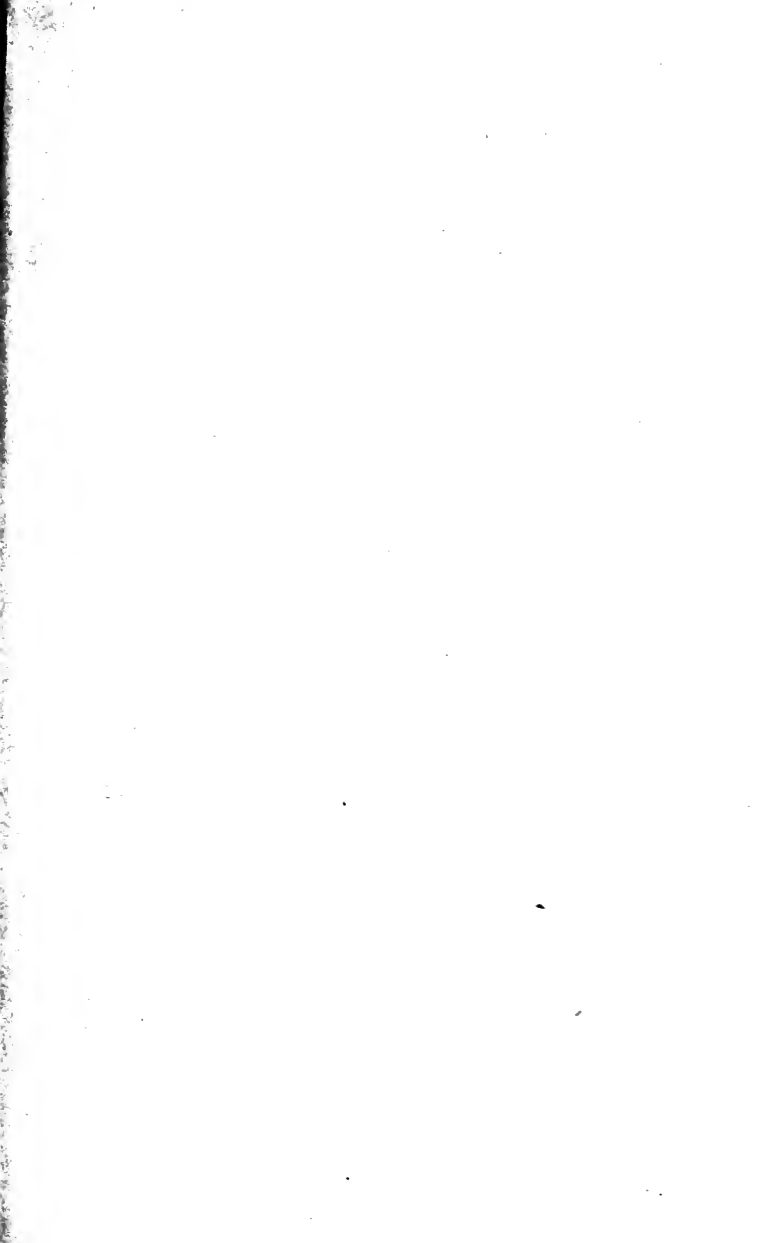
a quiet and a humble grave.

\* Ugo Foscolo. I Sepolcri.

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